

INDIA TODAY

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HON DEAL THE STRUCTURE SURFACES CLISTE INTERVENIEN RAUN CANDA Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation C MARCH I 1990 MAR- AMP Photograph taken by a fleeing survivor seconds after the Bangalore Airbus crash 1320 PURCHAS

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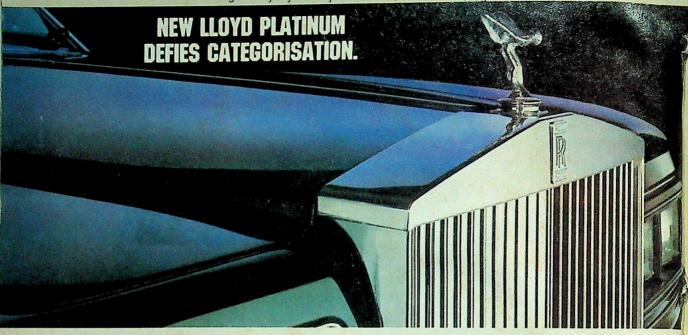
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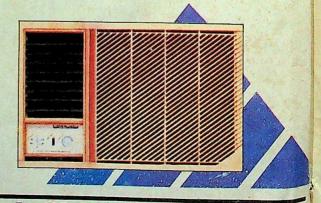
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A Sordid Saga

The reopening of old files in the aftermath of the Bangalore Airbus A 320 crash reveals that the decision to purchase the A 320 was pushed through hastily and arbitrarily, in the face of stiff oppostion from officials in the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Ministry of Finance and the Planning Commission.

COVER STORY ...



Ocean of Change

East Europe is undergoing a historic transition. Romania, Czechoslovakia and East Germany have all been engulfed by the democratic spirit. A visit to these countries reveals that the people are savouring a new-found freedom, even as new governments wrestle with problems of paucity and change.

SPECIAL FEATURE



"I feel frustrated"

In his first interview after the Congress(I) was voted out of power, Rajiv Gandhi in his new role as the leader of the Opposition attacks the V.P. Singh Government's handling of Punjab and Kashmir. The former prime minister also emphatically denies that Congressmen are turning against him.

INTERVIEW OF THE FORTNIGHT 30



Tremors of Dissent

The movement for democracy in Nepal has now got a new thrust with the Nepali Congress and the seven-party Left Front joining hands. A report from the trouble-torn Himalayan kingdom and an interview with Ganesh Mansingh, the incarcerated leader of the Nepali Congress.

NEIGHBOURS......145



The Scandal Surfaces

The HDW submarine deal has suddenly assumed centre stage again. Following the change of government at the Centre, the CBI has reopened the case and filed an FIR charging senior officials of tampering with facts and figures to ensure that HDW got the contract. An exclusive inside story.

SPECIAL REPORT



A Rare Find

Twenty-eight rare rock-cut caves, containing Hindu sculptures belonging to the medieval period, have been unearthed recently. While their proximity to the famous Ellora caves invests them with a special significance, the cave temples also reflect some of the magic associated with the cult of Shiva.

ARCHAEOLOGY......153

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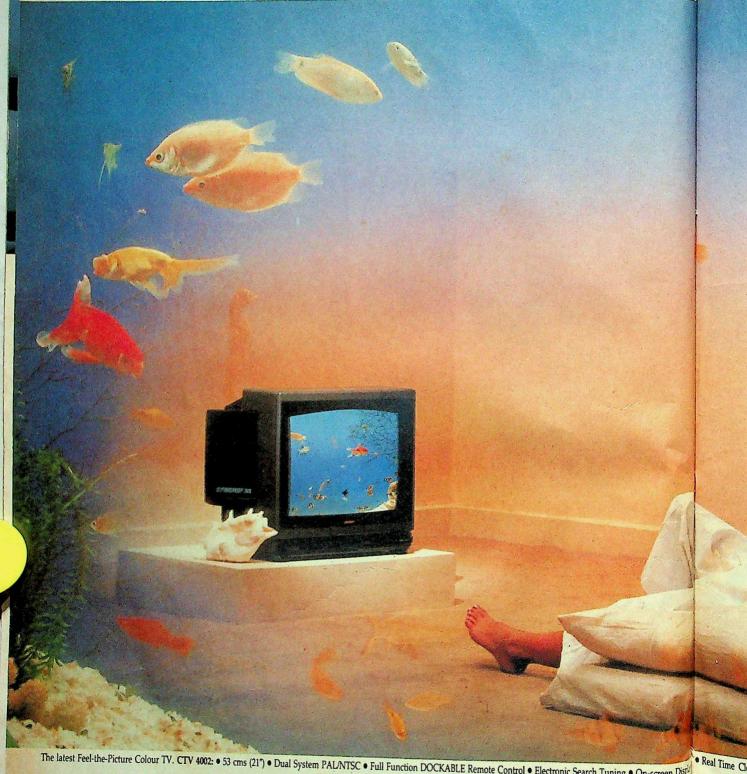
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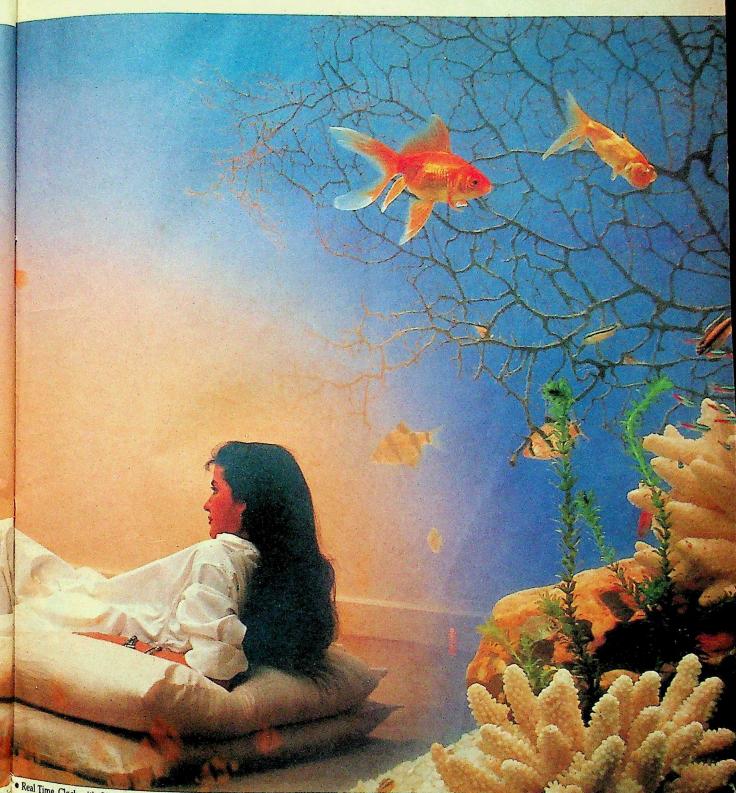
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TOUGH STAND

The Pakistan Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, seems to be pursuing the hard line policy adopted by the late Ziaul-Haq ("Raising the Stakes", February 28). Those who looked forward to India forming good relations with Pakistan cannot help feeling disappointed.

New Delhi

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SHAILENDRA KUMAR

SECURITY BLUES

It is really shocking that the Government is spending Rs 1 crore on Rajiv Gandhi's security arrangements ("Security Sniping", February 28). He would do the nation a great service if he stopped being a 'limpet' on the exchequer. And, perhaps, loyal Congress(I) musclemen. who abound in the party, could protect their beloved 'high command' instead. Cochin JAIKUMAR S.V.

DISTORTING HISTORY

It is distressing to learn that some people believe that Tipu Sultan ("Communal Casualty", February 28) was anti-Hindu. This is a totally distorted version of history. In fact, he was a glorious leader who fought for freedom from the British.

Abu Dhabi

SYED F. RAHMAN

NATIONALIST FERVOUR

The situation in the Soviet Union ("Pangs of Change", February 15) is frightening. If President Mikhail Gorbachev doesn't take immediate steps to control the violence, Azerbaijan could well prove to be his undoing.

ANURAG K. AGARWAL

■ It seems that Gorbachev's glasnost has boomeranged on him. Hopefully, saner elements will prevail and let his policies prove their worth.

Bombay

VIJAY D. SAMPAT

It is important for Gorbachev to put his own house in order before he resumes the global peace initiatives. However, steering his nation out of the present crisis of communal and religious fanaticism will require all his political skills and acumen.

Kotdwara

DALBIR SINGH

After Gorbachev initiated the democratisation process in eastern Europe, it was natural that his own people would demand the same. Now the only choice before him is to either give them a democracy or a Tiananmen Square. The world can only pray for the people.

Varanasi

AMBRISH SAHNI

STRATEGY FOR SURVIVAL

The report ("Ambivalent Militant", February 15) clearly shows that Simranjit Singh Mann does not have a clear stand on the Punjab issue. His dilemma is that he wants to carry the militants along as well as project a secular image. Jabalpur S.S. SUBRAMANIUM

It is still not clear whether Simranjit Singh Mann wants a peaceful solution to the Punjab problem through negotiations or wants to use the extreme path of action to resolve it.

West Bengal

KALYAN RAY

Leaders who adopt an ambiguous posture cannot be expected to lead the people in the right direction.

New Delhi

VIJAY LAKSHMI SINGH

HASTY DECISIONS

The National Front Government is justified in making the necessary policy changes ("For Change's Sake", February 15). But while it is important to root out corruption and favouritism, the Government shouldn't be hasty in its decisions.

Indore

PRABHAKAR HARSOLE

 There is no doubt that the National Front Government is more liberal than its predecessor. But in its enthusiasm to

gain popularity, it is damaging democratic institutions. A glaring example is its decision to remove all governors appointed by the previous regime and install its own favourites, without the consent of the state chief ministers. Worse, by violating the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission, the Government has proved itself to be merely "old wine in a new bottle".

COSMIC COMMUNION

Osho was no maverick, but an original thinker who justifiably attacked traditional views ("Man who Dared be God", February 15). And his writings and speeches are sufficient proof of his originality.

Bhubaneswar

DHANANJAY PATRO

Osho was an unusual guru who championed the cause of sexual freedom. His contribution to religio-philosophic thought is unique.

Sonepat

K. GOPAKUMAR MENON

■ Though Rajneesh called himself Bhagwan, he died as an ordinary human being after struggling with several diseases.

Hyderabad

U. BHARAT BHUSHAN

Frustration and despair led many westerners to patronise Rajneesh. To me his eyes always revealed sadistic violence and greed.

Holland

RHEA VINCENT

 Rajneesh may have taken the world for a ride, but he certainly did it in style on a Rolls Royce.

Ootacamund

K.V. KRISHNAN

■ With his mesmerising voice and personality, recorded on thousands of audio and video cassettes, Bhagwan Rajneesh will remain a phenomenon for posterity.

Amritsar

R.C. KHANNA

BURNING PROBLEM

The Congress(I) is responsible for complicating the Kashmir problem ("A Formidable 'Challenge'', February 15). The party claimed during the elections that its heart beats for India. But at the moment it seems as though its heart is

VOLUME XV NUMBER 5: FOR THE FORTNIGHT MARCH 1-15, 1990

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only pumping fuel into the nation's burning problems.

Gorakhpur SANJAY SRIVASTAVA

Pakistan is surreptitiously aiding the Kashmiri militants and interfering in India's internal affairs. Although a war will result in great loss to both countries, Pakistan should remember that India has tremendous resilience and will not hesitate to use an iron hand to maintain its territorial integrity.

Varanasi

IAIDEEP BARMAN

A POLITICAL MOVE

By replacing most of the governors, the National Front Government has given the final touches to the politicisation of the gubernatorial institution ("A Mass Exit", February 15). Perhaps the move would have been credible if the new incumbents had not included as many as five National Front members.

New Delhi

RAVI KISHAN

DEHUMANISING CHILDREN

The report on children who are awaiting trial languishing in prison ("A Chained Childhood", February 15) was heart-rending. Remand homes and prisons only serve to dehumanise these children. Human rights organisations should take up their cause and approach higher courts for justice. After all, justice delayed is not necessarily justice denied. Palghat

M. RAJAN

MAJESTIC SPLENDOUR

The photo feature on the elephant festival ("Tusks and Trunks", February 15) in Kerala reflected the rich cultural heritage of the state. Such festivals help to attract foreign tourists.

Ahmedabad

P.V. RAGHUNATHAN NAIR

■ The elephant show put up by the Kerala Government was nothing but a gimmick. To suppose that tourists will come all the way from Europe, the US and Japan just to see a hundred elephants is ridiculous.

Kottayam

JAYAN JOSEPH K.

A CLARIFICATION

The picture accompanying "An Idyllic Friendship" (February 15) is not fully captioned. It also shows the Maldivian Foreign Minister Fathulla Jameel and the Indian High Commissioner M.P.M. Menon.

-Editor

IN A SHAMBLES

Your report ("House in Disorder", January 31) clearly depicts the sorry state of affairs in the Congress(I). It appears that Congressmen have not learnt a lesson from their poor showing at the hustings last November. In their pursuit of power, they continue to behave arrogantly and ignore public opinion.

New Delhi

BHAGWAT GOEL

SECULAR SPIRIT

The fact that a non-Hindu, Rahi Masoom Raza, is the dialogue writer for the teleserial *Mahabharat* ("Echoing the Past". January 31) is a perfect example of the spirit of secularism in India.

Vishakhapatnam

C. SURYALAKSHMI

IN POOR TASTE

It was clear from Khushwant Singh's review of Elaine Aaron's Samraj ("Epic Erotica". January 31) that the book makes vulgar reading. To say that it will meet the same fate as Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses is a bit far-fetched. The book will only be ignored like other pornographic material. Despite certain facts which are unrealistic in the present context, the Hindus revere the Mahabharata as a great epic.

Hyderabad

B. NARAYAN RAO

■ The reviewer's lewd eye seems to have only noticed the scenes of deflowering, nuptials and the consummation of Draupadi's marriage.

Bhopal

M. MANUJA

The book Samraj ought to be banned because it insults Hindu tradition. Further, the language used in it is pornographic. This sort of writing is not freedom of expression, but an assault on the sentiments of those people who hold the epic as sacred.

Vaniyambadi

FARAK B. SHUKOOR

Though Elaine Aaron's book is blasphemous, it shouldn't be allowed to go the Rushdie way. Fortunately, India doesn't have a Hindu counterpart of Khomeini to issue a death sentence.

Jaipur

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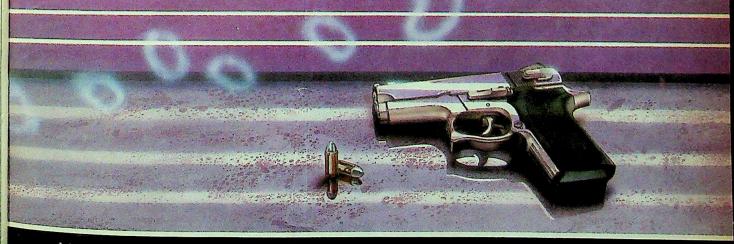
■ Samraj is a distorted version of the epic Mahabharata and uses vulgar language to describe the Pandavas, Draupadi and Krishna. The Government should immediately take steps to ban the book and the author.

Maharashtra

BHASKAR M. RAUT

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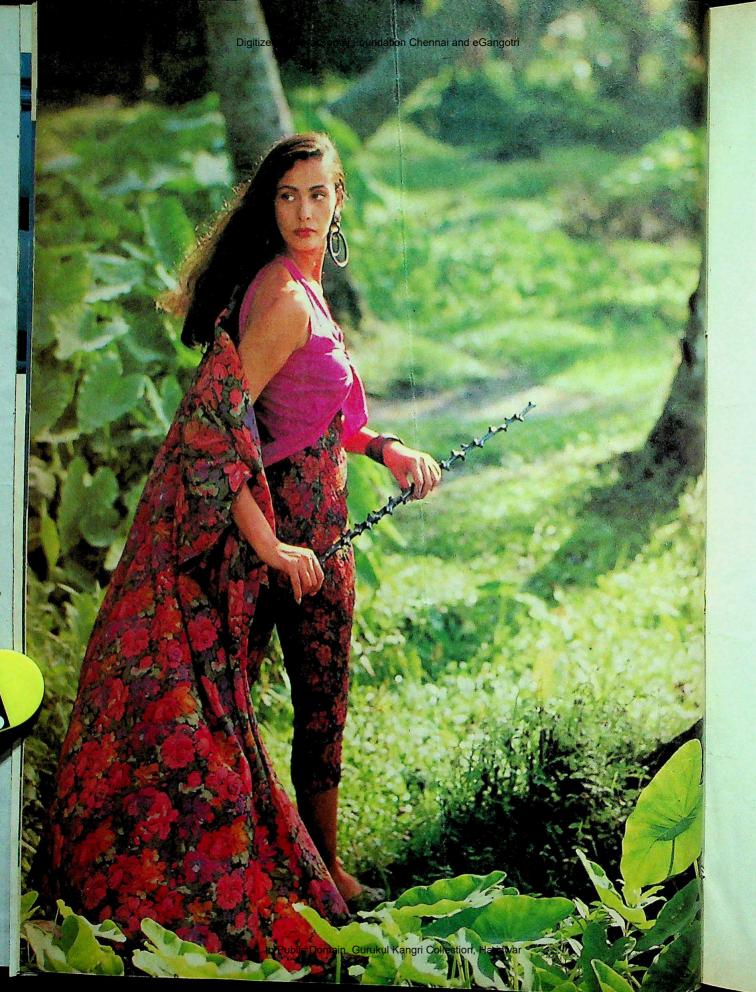
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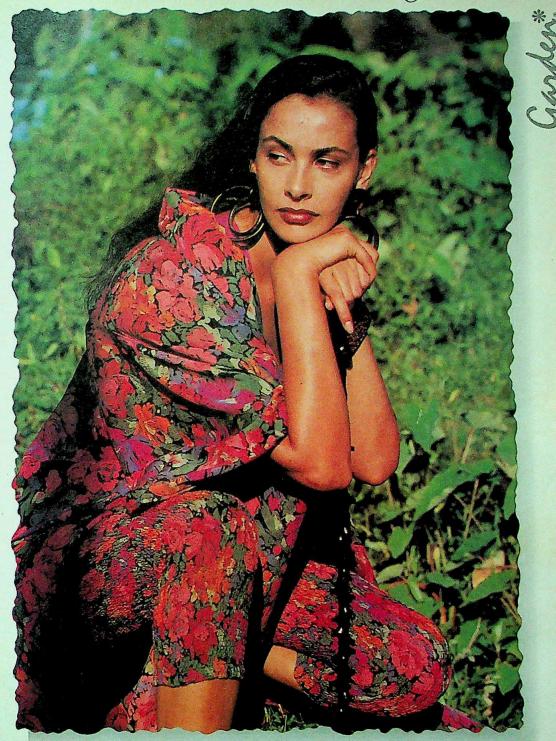
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Missing the Bus

EALING, the wise man said, is a matter of time but it is also sometimes a matter of opportunity. Nothing could have been truer in the case of Punjab with the fall of the Rajiv Gandhi government and all it represented and the advent of the new dispensation. Prime Minister V.P. Singh seemed to be ushering in a new era of hope when he declared that solving the bloody mess in the state was his government's top priority. He appeared to be following the maxim that you should hammer your iron when it's glowing hot.

The first few hammer-blows were well-timed and executed with dexterity and precision. Singh's emotional visit to Amritsar. Repealing the abominable 59th Amendment to the Constitution. The recall of governor Siddhartha Shankar Ray. Calling for special courts to try the murderers of innocent Sikhs during the November 1984 riots. The all-party meeting.

But the promising start seems to be fizzling, the rapidlycooling iron no longer responding to the hammer. We are back once again to the body counts, the "dreaded terrorists", the gruesome encounters. And the violence has touched a new high with attacks on paramilitary personnel, bomb blasts within the high-security police complexes at Jalandhar and Phillaur during the past two months, and the use of sophisticated weapons like landmines.

Most Punjab watchers agree that the V.P. Singh Government, untainted by the anti-Sikh attitude that characterised the Rajiv regime's approach to Punjab. enjoyed the advantage of a natu-

ral reservoir of goodwill among ordinary people. And some of its early steps and pronouncements served to enhance this. So what's going wrong?

The initiative seems to be bogging down. The pace and speed slackening. And this is glaringly obvious in one critical arena where lightning change, a top-to-bottom overhaul, was essential—the administrative apparatus. The exit of Ray was supposed to symbolise the end of a system of governance in which repressive police measures were given primacy over every other administrative or political tool, and the emergence of a new civilian face of government under a more liberal governor.

By all accounts, Governor Nirmal Mukarji is a decent and humane administrator. But these qualities, while essential in dealing with some aspects of the Punjab imbroglio, are not sufficient. Punjab is a super-venomous snakepit and needs machiavellian management as well, particularly of its officialdom. Ray has departed, but because of the lack of sustained follow-up, the administrative structure and the police and civilian officials, who enjoyed his confidence and still represent his legacy, continue to be in charge.

And this is a perilous neglect. For there are any number of officials, symbols of the old order, who have a vested interest in continuing along their corrupt ways and who are determined to sabotage the process of amelioration through design or default. It is no exaggeration to say that official corruption thrives in the atmosphere of terrorism. Killers and officials develop a symbiotic relationship. Officials have found a convenient shelter behind the emergency situation in Punjab to avoid accountability for their actions. And they now continue to function unfazed even under changing circumstances.

OLITICALLY too, the Government missed at least one important boat. Simranjit Singh Mann represented an opportunity. While it was correct for the Government not to accede to some of his more fanciful demands, the holding of assembly elections in Punjab along with other states, as he

had suggested, was well worth the risk. It could well have rekindled the political process at the cost of terrorist groups.

Arguments that an assembly poll in Punjab would be no more than another weapon of intimidation in the hands of terrorists do not quite jell with the reality of the Lok Sabha elections. After all, a Congress(I) candidate did win from Gurdaspur. And the National Front Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, representing the peace initiative, won overwhelmingly from Jalandhar. In both areas terrorists are supposed to be calling the shots. And in several terrorist areas, non-Sikh candidates of the Bahujan Samaj Party also fared

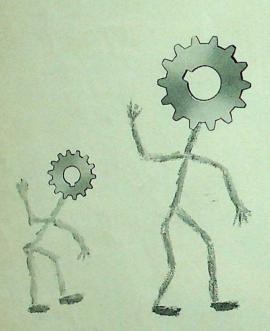
well. What should have been singularly significant, especially to those who argued that assembly polls would result in the election of extremist groups who would declare the formation of Khalistan, is that nowhere in Punjab were the Lok Sabha elections fought on the Khalistan issue. Another encouraging sign was that a section of militants from the Damdami Taksal and the AISSF who spurned the political process in 1984 participated willingly in the Lok Sabha polls.

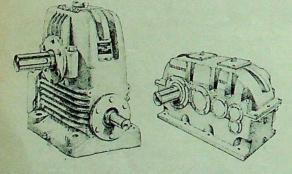
The denial of assembly elections in Punjab is another signal to the Sikh masses that they are still being singled out for punishment. But without their help and participation there can be little hope of turning the popular tide against terrorism. Once again, in the absence of a political solution and continuance in power of a discredited force of police and civilian officials, even the militants who are eager to participate in the democratic process, no matter how outrageous their initial demands, will be rendered increasingly irrelevant.

Four things come not back, goes the aphorism: the spoken word, the sped arrow, time past, and the neglected opportunity. If V.P. Singh does not quickly seize the opportunity that he has himself been able to force, historians will justifiably say of his government's policy in Punjab: they have learned nothing and forgotten nothing.

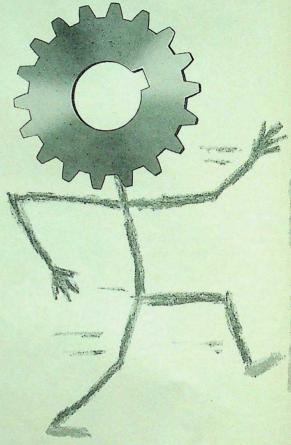


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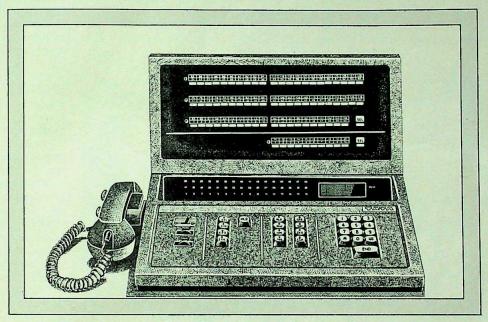
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Axing Fears

. True to form, the National Front Governmentwhich had proclaimed during its very first week in power that the nation's coffers were empty-has taken out its knife on all the pet projects of the previous Congress(I) regime in which it suspects wasteful expenditures may



have been involved.

Among those coming under the new Government's microscopic scrutiny is the highprofile Nehru Centenary Committee, that was recently rendered defunct.

The committee had hogged dubious spotlight last year for its several widely-publicised gimmicks, prime among which were the Freedom Run and the 'Dandi march'. And it was this committee that gave the country the much-maligned Mera Bharat Mahan slogan.

The Government has a special interest in its publicity expenditures because Rajiv Gandhi's confidants like Arun Nanda and Romi Chopra were associated with it.

Sleuths from the Comptroller and Auditor General's office were told that the organisation had spent a total of Rs 300 crore, but the actual amount was about Rs 5 crore because many of the planned projects never actually took off the ground.

Still, the probe is creating waves. Many of those associated with the committee's projects are getting the jitters.

Uncle Singh

• Prime Minister Singh, in the relatively lowsecurity atmosphere that surrounds him. is used to all kinds of visitors at all odd hours at his 28. Lodi Estate residence in the capital. But he could hardly have been prepared for a group of young visitors that descended on him last fortnight.

A gang of schoolchildren from the junior section of a high school next door, who were walking home or to their bus-stops, decided to make a detour and call on the nation's chief executive.

The children marched up to the prime minister's gate. and to their surprise, were let in without ado and ushered into a lawn. They were even more surprised when several minutes later a smiling V.P. Singh came out to greet them

Carloons by AJIT NINAN

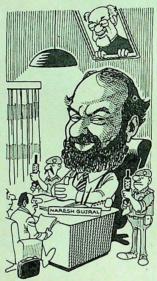


with the words: "What a nice surprise to hear children's voices." Some of the kids, ungrateful wretches that children can be, complained about excessive security and road-blocks. And Singh soothed them with some poetry recitals.

Is the raja becoming a chacha?

Offspring Security

 Providing security—how much and to whom-has become an item of hot debate and disagreement among officials of the Government who shoulder this awesome responsibility. One decision the Government took soon after it was sworn in was that family members of ministers would



not be provided the kind of tight security witnessed in the Rajiv era.

Then came the kidnapping of Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's daughter, Rubaiya, in Srinagar, Following her release, the home minister's family is guarded round the clock.

Security officials have also made an assessment that the children of all important ministers are 'soft targets' for terrorists and must be provided protection.

But what about adult offspring? One person in this category under discussion last fortnight was the son of Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Guiral-debonair businessman Naresh Gujral, who is in his late 30s.

The amiable and gregarious Naresh should hardly require such protection, considering how he campaigned for his father in some of the most terrorist-infested areas of Punjab during the recent Lok Sabha elections.

The Government, however, wants to take no risks. And Naresh is likely to get security, like it or not.

Back in Favour

 Anyone with a history of dust-ups with the former government stands a good chance of being rehabilitated by the present one. Last month. much to his fraternity's surprise, Dr A.S. Paintal, directorgeneral of the Indian Council of Medical Research, was given a two-year extensionjoining the long list of officials gaining redressal.

Paintal, whose previous term ended in August last year, reportedly ran into rough weather with the previous government. They had refused to extend his term and asked him to continue till they found a replacement. But in the meanwhile, general elections were called and Paintal gained a repreive.

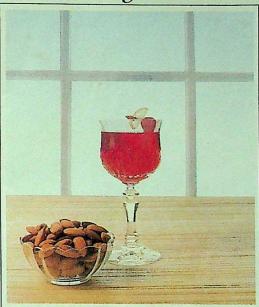
Part of the reason for his fall from grace were his controversial views on some



health problems. Prime among them: advocating a law to ban Indians from having sex with foreigners in order to curtail the spread of AIDS. And championing the pill as the best contraceptive for population control.

Now that he's in the saddle for two more years, more such talk can be expected.

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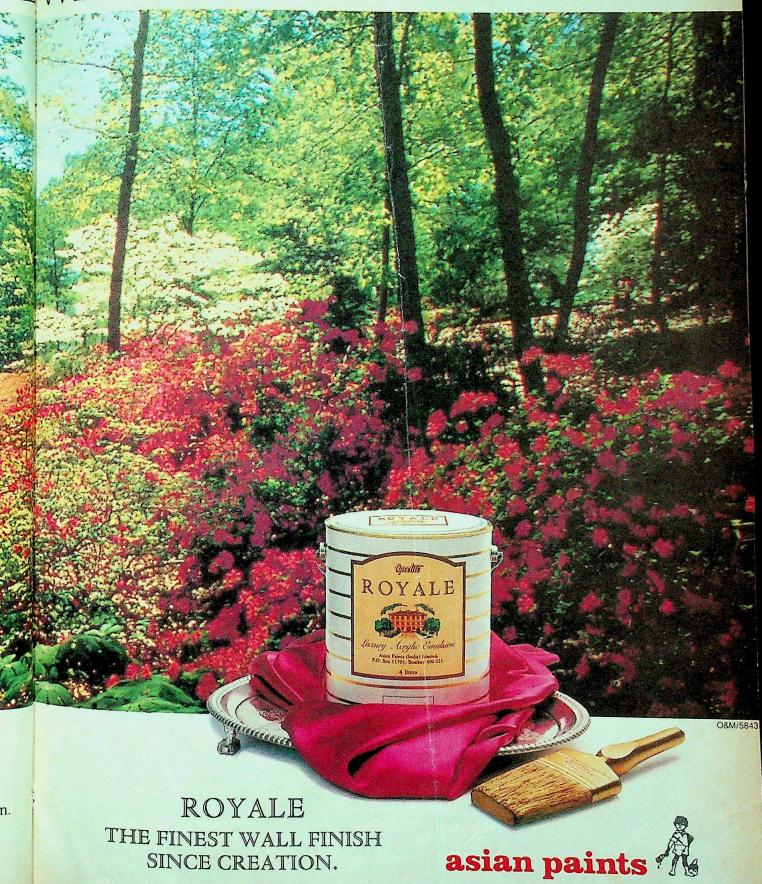


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- Sharad Pawar is the high command and Rajiv Gandhi is the low command.
 - NASIKRAO TIRPUDE after resigning from the Congress(I)
- I think this is a cleansing process and I welcome it.
 - SHARAD PAWAR about the defections from the Congress(I)
- It is very easy to throw stones at a wounded lion when he is down.
 - VASANT SATHE criticising those who have deserted the Congress(I)
- Jayalalitha has been telling people she would like a relationship with Rajiv Gandhi which would be like the confluence of the Ganga and the Cauvery. One wonders what will emerge at the end of it. M.J. AKBAR in The Independent
- We are against those who say 'Pakistan zindabad' and raise the Pakistan flag. We don't say that all Muslims are traitors. We are not against Muslims. But those who say Pakistan can go to Pakistan. We are willing to pay for their expenses.
- We express our heartfelt thanks to the President of India and the prime minister for the appointment of Swaraj Kaushal as the governor of Mizoram.
 - LALTHANHAWLA, Mizoram chief minister, and opposition leader LALDENGA in a joint public statement
- The situation in the communist parties in India is better with more inner party democracy and without the ills of their counterparts.
 - C. RAJESHWAR RAO, general secretary, Communist Party of India
- I have always been writing; only now I am doing so in my own name. Earlier I
 was writing under my pseudonym—Rajiv Gandhi.
 - MANI SHANKAR AIYAR in The Telegraph
- I think it will be unfair to him (Azharuddin) because he has just come out of a bad patch....I think he should be left alone...the captaincy should have gone to Kapil Dev.

 MANSUR ALI KHAN PATAUDI in Newstrack
- Anil (Kapoor) is definitely number one. No doubt about it.
 - AMITABH BACHCHAN in Sunday
- I used to fall in love with every girl I met till I got married when I was 25.
 - ASHOK KUMAR in The Times of India

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From the Publishers of INDIA TODAY

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COWED DOWN

Normally, it is political leaders who milk their voters dry for money. This time around, it was the turn of milkmen in Bikaner to get even with politicians.

Having been deprived of grazing ground, the milkmen found a unique form of protest to recover their land ac-



quired by the district administration. Since the officials had long turned a deaf ear to their demand, they decided to make the politicians chew cud. And so 140 milkmen marched to the local returning officer the day assembly elections were announced and filed their nomination papers en masse.

Stunned at the possibility

of losing the election if the votes were split among so many candidates, the politicians immediately talked to the people concerned. Soon enough, a stay order was issued on the construction being planned on the grazing ground. The milkmen. of course, promptly withdrew from the elections, preferring their own green pastures.

TREE TIES

Marriages, it is said, are made in heaven. But this one was different. It was made and firmly rooted on earth. The bridegroom: a peepul tree. The bride: a neem tree.

With all the traditional trappings of a Hindu wedding, a silk-and-brocade swathed neem tied the knot with a dhoti-clad peepul in Karnataka's Ulsoor town recently. As a nadaswara quartet played Carnatic music in the background, a gold mangalsutra was tied to the neem on behalf of the peepul by one of the officiating priests.

The reason for the unusual wedding: apparently; the natural growth of the two



species next to each other is rare. The peepul represents the holy Hindu trinity, and the neem their mythical consorts.

As both partners have their feet firmly on the ground and have withstood the changing climes for long, there is certainly no reason why they should not live happily ever after.

GRAFFITI WARS

The writing on the wall cannot be more explicit: religious fundamentalism is most certainly here to stay. Particularly if you were to go by the new graffiti that has sprung up on some of the walls in the capital.

Immediately after the colourful election graffiti had



been washed over, the freshly painted walls were defaced all over again. Only this time around the message wasn't political, it had a distinctly religious tone. "Jesus is coming soon," one grafitto screamed.

Not everyone, however, was prepared to wait for the event to happen. That became obvious the following

day when there was an addition to the prophesy. Not wanting to be left behind, another fanatic had scribbled in large letters: "To become a Hindu."

Now, it would not come as too much of a surprise if the Jesus-freak were to return and scribble: "Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

DEADLY MESSAGE

Even if the security forces haven't been able to make much headway in curbing terrorism in Punjab, the Telegraph Department seems to be doing a far better job of preempting militant attacks.

This was discovered by a journalist in the capital re-

cently as he sent a telegram to a friend getting married in Pathankot. Instead of a standard "congratulations" the cable read: De Mello, tu to gaya (De Mello, you are finished). He was referring to the cult line from the Hindi film, Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron.

He had barely handed over his form when he was



whisked off by suspiciouslooking telegraph officials.
Convinced that he was a terrorist sending a threatening
note, they began shooting a
volley of questions at him and
were ready to tie the knot
round his wrists. Luckily for
him. he had the wedding card
with him—which he pulled
out to prove his innocence.

BITING SOLUTION

■ To walk along the streets of Delhi a woman must be fully armed to meet the threat posed by eve-teasers. At least that is the advice 28-year-old executive and reptile expert Manjoo Singh has to offer other women.

She does not just carry



cash in her bag, as some pistol-wielding eve-teasers on a motorcycle, who bared their fangs at her in a Delhi street, realised. When she opened her purse, in a flash out came a couple of snakes which she always carries with her. The eve-teasers slithered away and even left behind their pistols as the snakes almost

curled round their wrists.

Manjoo Singh's pet snakes are non-poisonous but have the ability to scare away anyone who wants to hiss into a lonely lady's ears or pinch her purse. But then it is unlikely that too many distraught ladies will want snakes pulling at their purse strings.

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iny ant rse **AIRBUS A 320 PURCHASE**

A Sordid Saga

The Rs 2,400-crore Airbus deal smacks of undue haste and arbitrariness

AST fortnight when Union Civil Aviation Minister Arif Mohammed Khan ordered the grounding of all of Indian Airlines' 14 A 320 Airbuses-the most drastic step ever taken in the country's aviation history following an aircrash—he also set the ball rolling for what is expected to turn into a sweeping investigation of yet another controversial

megabuck deal in which the Rajiv Gandhi government spent more than Rs 2,400 crore for purchase of the aircraft.

The immediate reason for the grounding was to enable an evaluation of passenger safety and a comprehensive assessment of factors that could shed more light

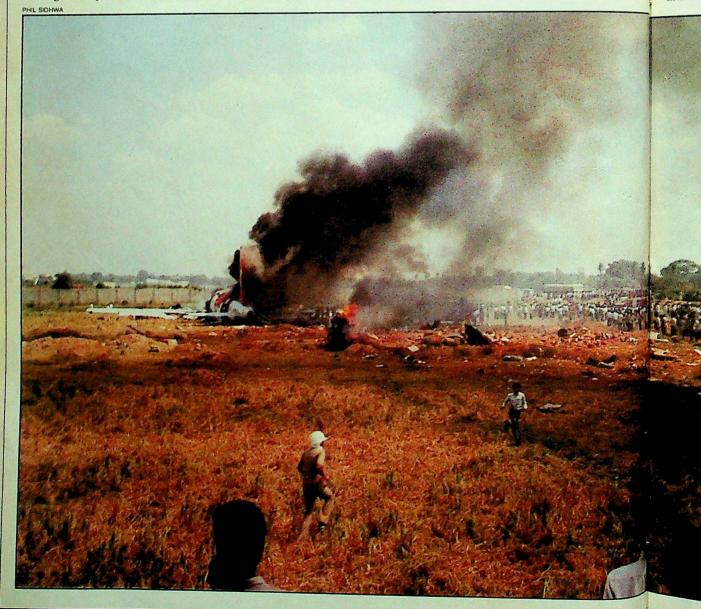
Wreckage in Bangalore: many doubts

on the Bangalore crash in which 90 passengers were killed (see accompanying story). The quality of the A 320, billed as one of the most advanced passenger flying machines, is not yet being questioned. But as senior officials began reopening old files, some alarming details began to pop up. An officially-recorded trail of evidence up to the signing of two final Airbus 320 pushed undue othero ing sign quacy (system the ne evaluat So. Khan h start a

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contracts in September 1985 and July 1988 indicates that the previous government had pushed through the deal with undue haste; that it ignored other options as well as warning signals about the inadequacy of the ground support system; and brushed aside the need for more time to evaluate the aircraft.

So, in a parallel move, Khan has directed the CBI to start a scrutiny of the contract with the help of the V.P. Singh Government's most feared bloodhound, Bhure Lal, now a joint secretary in the Prime Minister's Office. Said Khan: "We are looking into the possibilities of re-

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PURCHASE CHRONOLOGY

Boeing-757

Aug 22, 1983

Expert committee set up by Indian Airlines Board

May 22, 1984

Submission of report by committee

June 13, 1984

Approval by board to acquire 12 B-757s

July 24, 1984

Letter of intent given to Boeing

Sept 21, 1985

Cancellation of letter of intent

19 Airbus A 320 Aircraft

Oct/Nov 1984

Receipt of unsolicited offer by government

Nov 14, 1984

Referred by government to IA

Nov 16, 1984

Submission of proposal by Airbus

Aug 30, 1985

Approval of IA Board to acquire 19 aircraft and take options for 12 more

Mid-September

Cabinet approval

Sept 20, 1985

Letter of Intent

Feb 27, 1986

Final approval of the Cabinet Committee to buy 19 A 320 aircraft

Mar 15, 1986

Purchase Agreement

Approval by IA to buy 12 more aircraft

July 8, 1988

Approval of cabinet for letter of intent

Oct 25, 1988

Letter of intent issued

June 2, 1989

Approval by government

June 5, 1989

Purchase agreement

viewing the deal."

According to details pieced together by INDIA TODAY, the quest for more aircraft to meet Indian Airlines' needs began in 1983. In August that year, a seven-member committee headed by Air Vice-Marshal Dilbagh Singh considered several choices-among them Airbus 300, McDonell Douglas MD-80, British Aerospace 146-100 and Fokker F-28-4000. It recommended the purchase of 12 Boeing 757s. On July 24, 1984, Boeing was issued a letter of intent to purchase, along with an advance of \$.09 million (Rs 1.35 crore). A firm order was to be placed

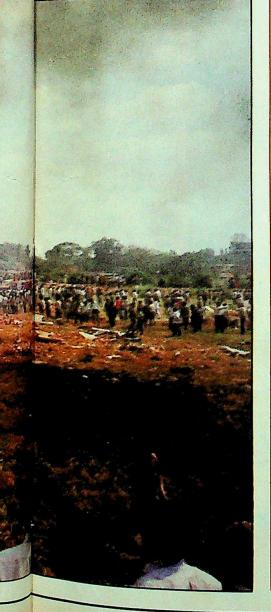
by October 31, 1984.

But events began moving off-track soon after Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister on October 31, 1984. Instead of going ahead with the Boeing purchase, the Civil Aviation Ministry, two weeks after Rajiv was sworn in, forwarded Indian Airlines an unsolicited offer from Airbus Industrie to sell the A 320 Airbus. which was not on the Dilbagh Singh Committee's list since it was not being commercially offered anywhere else.

Even as the Government was mulling over this dark horse prospect, Rajiv Gandhi accompanied, among others, by his pilot friend Satish Sharma, visited the Paris airshow in June 1985 and in a wellpublicised action, spent 30 minutes in the cockpit of the Airbus 320. Indian and French newspapers carried reports, based on official briefings, that the two governments were discussing the possibility of a purchase. Boeing, inexplicably, was suddenly on the backburner (see box). All ministry work on the final project report to be submitted to the Union Cabinet appeared to have ground to a standstill.

Instead, as the records reveal, the ministry and Indian Airlines had been busy on another task: changing both the air traffic projections on which the Boeing deal was negotiated and the nature of the fleet requirement. Meanwhile, all efforts by Boeing-officially still the leading contender—to negotiate afresh were spurned by Indian officials. June, July and August 1985 are crucial dates in this drama. For during that period, Indian Airlines suddenly produced a brand new report extolling the qualities of the Airbus and the advantages of acquiring it.

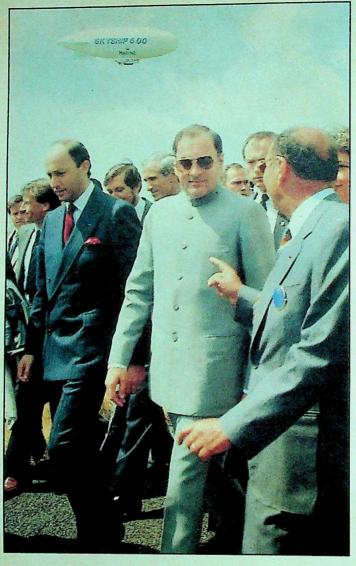
The subsequent developments which led to the selection of the Airbus 320 smack of arbitrariness and haste. While



the selection of the Boeing 757 followed a rigorous examination by a full committee of the Indian Airlines Board lasting nearly two years, no such expert committee was established for considering the Airbus. The decision was made almost at random by selected senior officials.

In fact, government files make it obvious that most officials had no idea that another deal (with Airbus) was in the offing. For example, as late as August 1, 1985, the then expenditure secretary R. Ganapati reminded the then civil aviation secretary S.S. Sidhu that the Finance Ministry had sanctioned the deposit and the placing of the letter of intent to Boeing "primarily in the context of a sense of urgency expressed by Indian Airlines for augmentation of their aircraft capacity which was stated to have reached saturation levels". Ganapati concluded: "I am constrained to observe that the case has not been pursued by Indian Airlines with the requisite diligence and urgency.'

Sidhu's note on the letter states: "We have to expedite this matter. I will be discussing it today with



Rajiv at the Paris airshow: unusual interest

"I am constrained to observe that...(the Boeing purchase) has not been pursued by Indian Airlines with the requisite diligence and urgency." -R. GANAPATI, Secretary,

Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, to S.S. Sidhu, Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation, in August 1985

"Additional acquisition of 12 aircraft would further strain the foreign exchange resources by Rs 960 crore. Also, ground handling and navigation facilities would need to be augmented at considerable cost..."

-Planning Commission to Finance Ministry in June 1988

HM (honorable minister)/ PM (prime minister) in the review meeting.' Ganapati never received a reply from the ministry until the proposal was officially activated.

The only reply, if it can be called that, arrived in the form of an August 26. 1985 letter from the then Indian Airlines managing director Kamini Chadha to Sidhu stating that the unsolicited Airbus proposal was sounder than the Boeing offer in all as-According pects. Chadha's estimate, A320 project for 19 aircraft would cost Rs 1,238 crore and if the airline opted for an additional 12 aircraft, it would have to spend an extra Rs 958 crore. On the other hand. he pointed out, the purchase of 12 Boeing 757s would involve a total cost of Rs 900 crore which would was more expensive real terms.

That was all that was required for the final push. A board meeting of Indian Airlines was convened post-haste on August 30 to choose between the Boeing and the Airbus. It was presided over by Captain A.M. Kapur, the then chairman, and attended by Sidhu, Captain D. Bose. Captain Kamini Chadha,

"While the A 320 may today be the most technologically advanced aircraft in a certain category, it does not logically follow that it is the most suitable to meet Indian Airlines' present requirements."

-P.C. SEN, Joint Secretary, **Ministry of Civil Aviation to** Indian Airlines, in June 1988 Nitish S Fontain

The Boeing had bee offering aircraft offered board a busesto reserved

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With Chadha with tw report to ate appr ence to t Boeing sion at later, w parison Airlines that Bo 300s wa tive bec "not ser have ser observe

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planew offered o Tha new Boe the lette director pleased 737-300 to evalu

But officials purchas were sev were de properly because ducted THE minister for civil aviation has a

colourful track record of resignations.

And that was what he almost did after the

Bangalore crash, virtually breaking down

on hearing of the mishap. For the 38-

year-old Arif Mohammed Khan-the

youngest ever cabinet minister in India-

the present crisis is a serious one. He is in

the eye of a raging controversy for his

decision to ground A 320 operations.

Khan spoke to Senior Editor PRABHU

CHAWLA at length on the issue. Excerpts

BHAWAN SINGH

from the interview:

"We won't risk people's lives"

We have taken this decision purely on

minister before taking this decision?

Ministry of Civil Aviation only. The

prime minister was definitely informed

about it. He made it clear that it was for

the ministry to take independent ini-

sources, the deal was also linked with

no conflict between good diplomacy

even though the country was not fully

geared to handle such a huge fleet?

question of reviewing the deal is also under consideration. People have

raised doubts about the speed with

which the entire deal was negotiated.

tion of the Boeing deal in favour of the

Airbus was done on merit?

process at that stage.

of secrecy.

Airlines?

Q. Do you think that the cancella-

A. I was not in the decision-making

Q. But you have access to the files.

A. But then I am bound by the oath

Q. People may not travel by the

A. We won't allow that to happen.

Q. How do you propose to restore

A. We have an action plan for this.

The emphasis is now going to be on

ensuring smooth flights with safety

and comfort. All the airports are likely

to be upgraded and provided with the

action on commissions' reports.

Q.The ministry has failed to take

A. We are looking into these com-

plaints. But now it has been decided

that the airlines will be run from

Airline House and the Air India head-

quarters, and not from Sardar Patel

Bhawan. We will not only provide

policy guidelines but will also monitor

their performance. But then we will

also ensure accountability. Once these

organisations are given enough au-

tonomy in their operations, in case of

any malfunctioning, heads will roll.

most modern equipment.

confidence in Indian

Q. According to diplomatic

A. When it comes to safety, there is

Q. Was the deal pushed through

A. Let us not dig the past. The

tiative on the merit of the case.

diplomatic compulsions.

and the country's interests.

Q. Did you consult the prime

A. The decision was taken in the

merit of the case.

ARIF MOHAMMED KHAN

inister)/

Fontaine.

Nitish Sengupta and Air Vice-Marshal La

Boeing 757 deal to which the Government

had been a party but also a fresh proposal

offering to negotiate the sale of 737-300 aircraft at a price comparable to that

offered by Airbus. Simultaneously, the

board approved the purchase of 19 Air-

buses to be delivered by January 1989, and

reserved the option to buy 12 more later.

been left hanging for more than a year, the

Government saw fit to move at breakneck

speed to clinch the Airbus offer. The

company had given a deadline-the offer

Chadha despatched a 12-page letter along

Within 48 hours of the board meeting,

would lapse by September 5, 1985.

with two copies of the project

report to Sidhu seeking immedi-

ate approval. He made no refer-

ence to the revised proposal from

Boeing offering the 737-300 ver-

sion at a negotiable price. But

later, without any detailed com-

parison on the record, Indian

Airlines informed the ministry

that Boeing's offer of 35 B 737-

300s was considered less attrac-

tive because the company was

"not serious" otherwise it could

have sent the offer earlier. It also

observed that the Boeing B-737

had a higher fuel consumption

tally, were reached not by any

expert committee but by the

board on the basis of data from

unknown sources rather than

from Boeing. In fact, Chadha

admitted in another letter to the

ministry that the fuel consump-

tion figures were provisional

offered on August 30, 1985.

to evaluate our offer...

since no technical data was supplied by

Boeing. The board also made the curious

assumption, again based on third party

sources, that the new Boeing offer was of a

plane with 138 seats, not the standard 146

new Boeing offer in detail is obvious from

the letter of R.L. Elliot, Boeing's regional

director, to Chadha stating: "We would be

pleased to provide additional details of the

737-300 airplane and prices to enable you

officials to process the Indian Airlines purchase request immediately, there

were several officials in the ministry who

were determined to see that the deal was

properly evaluated. This was important

because the Airbus 320 was being in-

ducted from almost the drawing-board

But even while Sidhu was directing

That no effort was made to discuss the

These conclusions, inciden-

on a particular range.

Curiously, even though Boeing had

The board rejected not only the earlier

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er) in the eceived a ministry was offi-

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Chadha.

Q. Why did you suspend the A 320

A. There is nothing unusual about

operations without even waiting for a

this decision. Since a lot of complaints

were pouring in about the aircraft and

the passengers were a little worried

about their security, this was the only

logical step to restore confidence. The

Government can't be expected to risk

has implications for the rest of the

with passengers' lives simply because

someone is backing it commercially or

politically. Gone are the days when

lobbyists could influence decisions.

Q. Don't you think the decision

A. Yes. But should we compromise

preliminary report?

the life of the people.

MARCH 15, 1990 . INDIA TODAY 25

stage. In fact, no other country had placed orders for it anywhere near the size of the Indian deal. Ministry officials, therefore, were insisting on details such as whether the purchase would entail any additional hidden expenditure.

For example, on September 10, 1985, P.C. Sen. a joint secretary in the ministry, wrote to Indian Airlines asking "whether any additional investment would be required

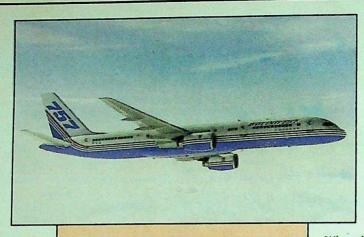
for the provision of necessary infrastructural facilities on the ground by the DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) or the International Airport Authority of

Chadha's reply: "The Airbus will be capable of operating to all the airports currently operated by B-737 aircraft. No additional expenditure will be required to be incurred for lengthening/strengthening of runways." Only much later was it discovered that not only was Indian Airlines to spend more than Rs 50 crore on training pilots, engineers and navigators but other agencies too were to spend over Rs 200 crore on facilities to accommodate the aircraft.

But despite the questions being raised, the Government not only ordered the first 19 aircraft on September 20, 1985 but also took an option to buy 12 more. That option was finally exercised in July 1988.

Both orders-which were approved with lightning-speed by the ministry and the Union Cabinetwere placed amidst serious reservations expressed by the Planning Commission and senior ministry officials who felt that before buying additional Airbuses, the possibility of purchasing other aircraft should be explored. By 1988, many of them felt that the Government should also wait for investigation reports of Airbus accidents which occurred that year. There was also the feeling that Indian Airlines and the country's airports may not be ready to handle the fly-by-wire aircraft.

In October 1988, the Indian Commercial Pilots' Association wrote in a letter to the Government: "We state that the aircraft is neither proven nor does Indian Airlines have the infrastructure to maintain



Boeing, Boeing, Gone

How the Airbus deal was fixed

- July 24, 1984: Indian Airlines sends letter of intent to Boeing for purchase of 12 B-757 aircraft with the delivery to be completed by December 1987. Letter says firm order is to be placed by 31 October 1984.
- January 3, 1985: Indian Airlines submits preliminary report and investment proposal for the acquisition of the Boeing aircraft to the Finance Ministry.
- May 17, 1985: Lionel H. Olmer, under secretary for international trade in the US Department of Commerce, meets S.S. Sidhu, the then secretary, civil aviation, discusses detailed offer and even negotiates prices. He confirms this in writing: "It is now my understanding that there is virtually no difference in price between the Boeing and Airbus offers It is our opinion that in view of the favourable delivery schedule and the proven technology of the Boeing aircraft, you will now be able to honour your original letter of intent and award the contract to Boeing."

The Olmer letter is not shown either at the ministry level or to the Indian Airlines board. It is placed in the files of a junior official on July 5, 1985, about seven weeks after it was delivered. Records show no fresh discussions on the offer.

- August 30, 1985: Gordon L. Streeb, deputy chief of mission at the US Embassy, writes to Sidhu making alternative offer of 737-300 aircraft. Streeb writes: "We trust that the Government of India will give due consideration to this latest offer by Boeing Aircraft and will afford them the same option of offering an alternative aircraft as was given to Airbus Industrie.'
- September 9, 1985: Indian Airlines writes Boeing a terse letter informing the company that both offers-for B-757 and 737-300-are unacceptable and asks for a refund of the \$.09 million (Rs 1.35 crore) deposit.

them....Even freak chance of main and back. up computer failure due to dust, heat, or humidity will end in a disaster as the pilot shall have no control whatsoever...'

But it was clear from the way Indian Airlines was handling the process of purchasing the additional aircraft that it had foreclosed all other options. This was evident from the correspondence in June 1988 between the airline and the ministry.

When the ministry received its final proposal for the 12 additional aircraft-before the final order was placed-Sen wrote a blistering 11. page rejoinder questioning the project. Sen also questioned the mysterious delay in submitting the proposal. He wrote: "The proposal should have been submitted much earlier and in any case not later than the third quarter of 1987 to have enabled the board and the ministry to have adequate time to examine the proposal, as well as other options available in detail.'

Sen also sought an explanation of why, in light of changing traffic trends since 1985, Indian Airlines had not considered the Soviet TU-204 aircraft and the A33-600 Airbus. Sen concluded: "While A 320 may today be the most technologically advanced aircraft in a certain category, it does not logically follow that the aircraft is the most suitable to meet Indian Airlines' present requirements."

The ministry also questioned Indian Airlines' stand in not seriously considering the Soviet aircraft, available against rupee payment at a time when there was pressure on foreign exchange reserves. The Planning Commission echoed that view. In a confidential note to the Finance Ministry, it wrote: "Additional acquisition of 12 aircraft would further strain the foreign exchange resources by Rs 960 crore." Also, the commission reckoned that the country needed only four additional aircraft to meet its requirements until 1993.

But the most baffling part of the purchase was Indian Airlines' refusal to wait for a detailed investigation of the crash of the Airbus 320 at the Paris airshow in June 1988, as well as an evaluation of the new

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V-2500 engine with which the aircraft was to be equipped.

According to government sources, the Airbus offer became cheaper than Boeing's only after this engine was selected as part of the package negotiated in 1985. Government critics of the deal had suggested that at least the option for the additional 12 aircraft should be exercised only after watching the performance of these engines on the 19 aircraft first ordered which became operational in early 1989. Incidentally, of the 79 A 320s now flying across the world, only 15 excluding the ones on Indian Airlines aircraft are fitted with the V-2500 engine.

Again, it was Sen who advised caution. He wrote: "An Airbus A 320 while on a demonstration flight on the 26th of June 1988 at Mulhouse, Habsheim, France met with an accident. The findings of the civil aviation authorities on the cause of this accident have not yet been received. It would be desirable to await their report before taking final decision on the additional Airbus A 320.'

But Airbus officials would not budge from the firm purchase deadlines they had set. The final letter of intent was signed on June 5, 1988 and the final order placed the next month. The records available so far do not reveal who was doing the armtwisting from on top in which evaluation procedures were violated and serious reservations by senior officials brushed aside. But what the files do not tell, the new Government is determined to uncover.

The questioning has just begun.

-PRABHU CHAWLA

INDIAN AIRLINES

Man Versus Machine

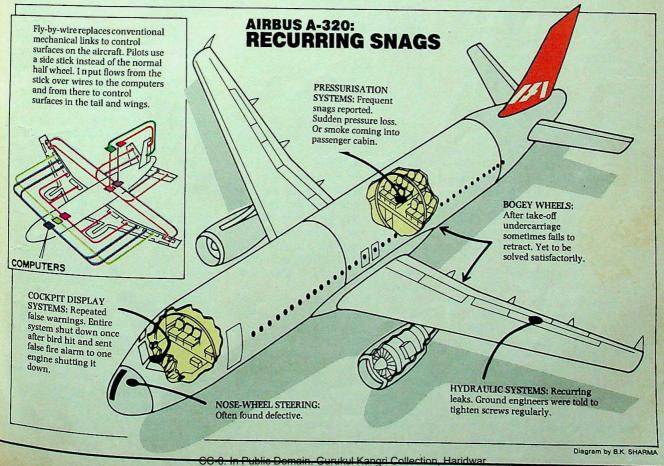
Recurring snags in the Airbus A 320 pose a painful dilemma for Indian Airlines

RISTLING with high-tech electronic gadgetry, the Airbus A 320 was billed as not just the most advanced passenger aircraft in the world but among the safest as well. Airbus Industrie, the French-dominated European consortium that makes the aircraft, has bagged orders for over 500 of the aircraft so far. Yet by last fortnight, like the charred remains of

Indian Airlines Flight 605 which crashed at Bangalore, the aircraft's awesome reputation lay in a shambles.

So low had public opinion of the aircraft dipped that four days after the crash that killed 90 people, the Civil Aviation Ministry took the extreme and unprecedented step of grounding the remaining fleet of 14 A 320s. The ministry then appointed an expert committee to go into the airline's preparedness to fly such sophisticated aircraft—just eight months after they were inducted.

The government's unprecedented action in grounding the Airbus A-320 fleet may have been a bit premature. A fortnight after the crash, there were no clear indications of whether it was a mecha-





nical or human failure that led to the A 320 aircraft touching down on a golf-course just 700 metres short of runway 09 of Bangalore airport. Apparently the aircraft rolled for 30 metres, bounced and again hit the ground after 60 metres. It then ploughed into a bundh and burst into flames. Only 63 passengers manage to escape.

Accounts of survivors indicate that barring the catastrophic last minutes nothing went seriously wrong in the hour-and-a-half-long-flight. Nor did Captain Satish Gopujkar and co-pilot Cyril Fernandes report any emergency onboard to Bangalore control tower. Fernandes, in fact, was undergoing a route check as part of his command ratings and was piloting the aircraft. Just minutes before the crash on that clear sunny afternoon, he had radioed the tower for clearance to land. It was the crucial 30 seconds before the plane crashed that holds the key to what went wrong.

Whether it was caused by human or mechanical failure, the Bangalore crash, raised questions about the airworthiness of the A 320 not just in India but in foreign airlines too. In France, the home-base of Airbus Industrie, a European consortium, pilots refused to fly the aircraft unless they were declared free from snags. The Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA) too pressed home a similar demand after indications that the expert committee may recommend a phased re-induction of the A 320s. The concern spread to the 11

A 320 cockpit: ultra sophistication

airlines across the world which were using similar aircraft. And suddenly the future of the A 320, one of the fastest selling aircraft in the business, seemed in terrible doubt.

HAT seemed to be a dangerous portent for an aircraft that was to usher in the age of electronics into civil aviation with its "fly-by-wire" technology. In the A 320, the usual maze of cables and pulleys that activate the control surfaces of an aircraft, have been replaced by a bundle of wires that transport electronic commands. These stem from a row of advanced digital computers capable of even independently controlling the aircraft. Inside the cockpit the usual bewildering row of meters has been replaced by sleek terminals that dislay vital information. All this is designed to reduce the workload of pilots and minimise human error.

Right from its induction, however, Indian Airlines A 320 fleet has been hit by snags. Among the first problems to strike was the decision to incorporate bogey wheels-an additional two wheels at the back-so that the aircraft could land in smaller airports in the country. For a while, the undercarriage of the aircraft refused to retract after take-off. Reason: the bogey wheels were exerting pressure that was sending false signals to the computer. Airbus Industrie sorted the problem out temporarily by removing a hydraulic fuse and have promised to make necessary design changes.

Last August, a bird struck the cockpit of a flight coming into land at Delhi. It triggered totally unrelated snags that saw the cockpit display panels go blank and sent a false fire alarm that shut down one of the engines. Airbus Industrie has already worked out design modifications.

Members of the ICPA complain that they have faced more snags than on conventional jets. As Captain P.K. Gupta. the association's general secretary, says: "We were hoping for a snag-free aircraft. But the A 320 is more snag-prone than many other aircraft we have flown.'

Despite many of the snags being minor, so serious has been the buildup that the airline's western region alone reported that over 75 A 320 flights were cancelled in the past seven months because of technological faults. Among the recurrent snags are drops in cabin pres sure, hydraulic leaks, false warnings coming from the display panels and malfunc tioning of computers. Pilots complain that instead of reducing their workload in the cockpit, it has only increased it. Says Captain R.N. Singh, regional secretary of the pilots association: "Let's say we all feel uncomfortable with the aircraft. And the snags have made us tense."

Nor has the V-2500 engine which Indian Airlines opted for lived up

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Who's to Blame?

UNWAY 09 at the Bangalore airport, which Flight IC 605 failed to reach, is a tricky stretch. Because of its mound-shape, pilots coming in to land feel they are flying higher than they really are. And because of the dip, aircraft experience

to a defence aviation expert, a serious malfunction in the computer controls system may have led to both the engines being shut down. The pilots then failed to glide the aircraft to safety.

By last week, however, experts were veering towards the theory of human error. They argue that the pilots had failed to notice that they were flying too low and were dropping short of the runway. Officials say that

MAHESH BHATT



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Aviation officials, who studied the crash site and who had access to the cockpit voice recorder, confirm that preliminary investigations showed no systems failure of the aircraft as it began to descend. Eyewitness reports indicate that the aircraft had come in higher than normal for landing. If that was true, then the pilots would have dipped the aircraft's nose a bit more to correct the angle of descent.

As the plane gradually lost height, the oral warning device, a special feature in the A 320 cockpit, kept reading out the altitude: 400 ft, 300 ft, 200 ft. The two pilots seemed secure that the aircraft was on the correct descent path.

Experts theorise that as the angle of descent was steep the aircraft would have been flying at more than its normal landing speed. Officials confirm that cockpit recorder tapes indicated that the aircraft had issued the oral warning: "Sink rate." To cut speed, the A 320's automatic thrust control would then have brought the engine power to almost idle.

What happened in the next few . seconds is still unclear. One possibility is that the aircraft experienced a sudden loss of power caused by engine failure and dipped down. According

Remains of the crash: many theories

one of the pilots reportedly exclaimed. " Oh! Shit." when the aircraft first hit some object.

The crash at Bangalore then would have some similarities to the one at the Paris airshow in June 1988 when the A 320 made a disastrous debut. The Paris crash, which killed three people, was attributed to pilot error after the aircraft had failed to pull out of a low run. The pilot later reported that despite pushing the throttle up, the two engines failed to respond fast enough. After the accident, Airbus Industrie warned operators of a 7.8 seconds time lag before the engine moves from idle power to full throttle.

At the Bangalore crash site too, the wreckage showed that the pilots had opened the throttle in a desperate bid to get the aircraft airborne again. While pilots argue that the engine response lag is a major systems defect. experts say that in conventional aircraft too the lag can be as much as six seconds. They point out that the pilots should have taken evasive measures much earlier.

The real truth of IC 605's gruesome end will be known from the court of inquiry's investigations.

-RAJ CHENGAPPA

expectations. International Aero Engines, the manufacturer had promised a 5-per cent fuel efficiency over the CMF-56 engines used by other airlines. But airline engineers say that it is yet to cross 4 per cent. (A 1-per cent fuel efficiency can save something like Rs 5 to 6 crore over the life of the aircraft). However, U.P. Singh, director engineering, Indian Airlines, says: "Many of these are teething problems. The manufacturers are making efforts to rectify the defects. We are confident of operating the A 320s safely."

ART of the problem is that the stateof-the-art aircraft was inducted haphazardly. While the deal to purchase the aircraft was signed in 1985, the programme to train pilots and engineers went on sluggishly. Meanwhile, there were long delays in the selection of land for hangars and workshops. That saw the airline scrambling to keep pace when the aircraft started arriving from June 1989.

Result: safety norms in many cases were violated. The ICPA pointed out that in order to enable 53 pilots to take command of A 320s the airline requested the director-general of civil aviation to waive the mandatory 100 hours of co-pilot experience. This has led to low-experience captains commanding A 320 flights.

Meanwhile, experts found serious flaws in the six-week training in Paris, which relied more on simulator tests. Captain B.K. Bhasin, who chaired an expert committee to review the Indian Airlines pilot training programme points out: "In the A 320s cockpit management and teamwork become crucial. But the training programmes don't stress these at

Adding to these problems is the lackadaisical functioning of the various civil aviation agencies. Whether it's airports having obsolete landing aids, inadequate training of pilots and engineers or poor licensing and airworthiness checks, all these have led to a situation where civil aviation is threatened with a total collapse (INDIA TODAY October 15, 1989). As Prakash Narain, chairman, National Transportation Safety Board says: "The level of safety is still highly unsatisfactory. And the pace of implementation of reforms is slow."

Clearly, the introduction of a highlysophisticated aircraft like the Airbus A 320 in an environment currently unsuited to cope with its advanced features has only added to the problems. Flight IC 605 was a grim reminder of the dangers of such neglect.

> -RAJ CHENGAPPA with CHIDANAND RAJGHATTA in Bangalore and RAGHU NANDAN DHAR in Bombay

RAJIV GANDHI

"This Government is too weak in handling tough issues"

FORMER prime minister Rajiv Gandhi has become something of a recluse ever since his party's defeat in last November's Lok Sabha elections. In these three months, he has also studiously avoided giving any interviews to the press despite the numerous requests that are piling up at the office in his new residence at 10, Janpath.

One reason is that he has hardly any time. Though he has largely confined himself to the capital, he still puts in long hours of work in his reduced role as leader and president of the main opposition party, the Congress(I).

Much of his time has been spent in party matters, discussing its reorganisation, dealing with state party units and deciding on the list of candidates and in preparation limited time which was available.

Excerpts from the interview, Rajiv Gandhi's first since the Lok Sabha polls last November:

Q. After five years as prime minister, how does it feel to be in the Opposition?

A. Actually, its not very different in many ways. At times I feel very frustrated because one sees things going out of control. One wants to help but the attitude of the Government is so vastly different on issues. On how to handle terrorism, for instance. The CPI(M) and the BJP also have a stand different from the Janata Dal but then they have their own constraints. Now I also have the time for organising

A. We wouldn't have let it get to the current state of affairs. We didn't allow it to get as bad as it presently is.

O. You have been extremely critical of Jagmohan's appointment as governor. But he held the same post during your prime ministership as well. Why is it that you did not raise any objections then?

A. In Kashmir, you need utmost cooperation between all centres of authority. There was clearly a personality clash between Faroog Abdullah and Jagmohan. I know that earlier too, Jagmohan wanted to dismiss Faroog and impose President's Rule. In Kashmir we need a popular government. Direct Central action is not good and it is proving to

"I don't know why my government came to be plaqued by charges of corruption. We took such a beating on Bofors. As far as I know, no one from my government was involved."

"There was so much talk of people leaving the Congress(I) in 1987 as well. I don't see anything happening as it is being projected. I have complete faith in Congressmen."

for the state elections. That is only to be expected. The elections—confined mainly to the politically strategic Hindi belt—are crucial to the future of the party. More vitally, the outcome will also be of considerable significance in terms of Rajiv Gandhi's political future.

Consequently, for the last two weeks, he has been undertaking a gruelling schedule, flying around the country in a private plane, addressing up to a dozen meetings a day, in an effort to retain power in the eight states and the Union territory of Pondicherry where assembly polls were held last week.

Following repeated requests for an interview, Rajiv finally agreed to speak to Senior Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA on his way back from an election rally in Mandideep, an industrial town 23 km away from Bhopal, at 2.15 a.m. Looking relaxed and cheerful, Rajiv settled back in his bullet-proof car to answer a wide range of questions in the

the party and will get down to this soon after the elections are over.

Q. How would you rate the performance of the National Front Government so far?

A. The Government is too weak in handling tough issues. No government can afford to handle tough issues in so weak a manner. It is so weak on terrorism, especially on Pakistan and what it is doing with Punjab and Kashmir. Look at the way Pakistan has internationalised Kashmir. This issue seems to be totally out of the Government's control. Then take the industrial front-it looks like a disaster. The Government seems to have no industrial policy.

Q. Punjab and Kashmir were serious problems when your government was in power as well. How would you have handled the situation if you were still heading the government?

be extremely dangerous. There is no interaction between the Government and any one who matters politically. There is no one individual who can mobilise the people. On top of that, they have ap pointed officers drawn from outside cadres.

Q. How do you expect the Congress(1) to fare in these elections? Do you see any change between now and November as far as the mood of the electorate is concerned?

A. There is a substantial change. I can feel it when I travel around the country. The main problem is that our party faces dissidence in many states. There is less in some but a lot in some other states. As is the case with the Opposition. But overall, feel that the results are going to be much better than the Lok Sabha results. With little bit of luck, the Congress (I) will certainly do better this time.

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O. In retrospect, do you now feel that you were misled by your advisers, by the coterie that had gathered around you?

A. It's difficult to say. I haven't had the time to go into this in depth. I've had to quickly try and put things right because the elections came so soon. I will definitely give this some thought. Maybe not right now, but definitely in a month's time.

Q. Why do you think your government came to be plagued by charges of corruption?

A. I honestly don't know. We took such a beating on Bofors. As far as I know, no one from my government was

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O. How do you react to the new CBI

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Q. How do you react to the evidence showing that your foreign minister, Narasimha Rao, had some involvement in a forgery in the St Kitts case?

A. I don't believe a word of it. Narasimha Raoji is definitely not that kind of a person. I know him very well.

Q. What are your views on the sensitive Ramjanmabhoomi issue and its communal implications?

A. They have taken the whole country for a ride. Just before the Lok Sabha elections, there was a proposal to prepone the polls to avoid the date of the shilanyas (November 9). It's now absolutely clear that the whole thing was a big political

Q. A lot of Congressmen-Abdul Ghafoor, Nasik Rao Tirpude and Sunil Shastri—are leaving the party....

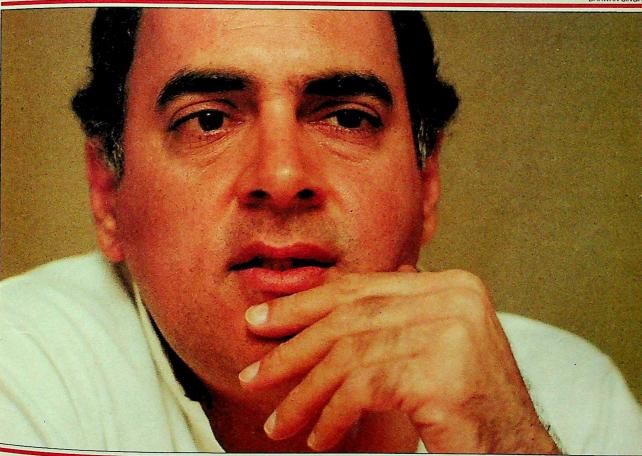
A. Not a lot, just two or three people. They are the chaps who couldn't even win an election. They are people who've been in and out. Who are very fickle in their beliefs.

Q. There is a lot of talk, even within Congress party circles, of Congressmen revolting against you after the assembly

A. There was so much talk of people leaving the Congress(I) in 1987 as well. I don't see anything happening as it is being projected. I have complete faith in Congressmen.

Q. Your party spokesmen have ex-

BHAWAN SINGH



inquiry on Bofors initiated by the National Front Government?

A. It's good. They should do whatever

Q. Will you support the Government in taking action against those involved in Bofors if sufficient evidence is finally produced?

A. Absolutely. But the Government must act on concrete facts, not merely on speculation. Normal procedures must be properly gone through. They can be expestunt, a ceremony which had no religious meaning. When I spoke to the Shankaracharya of Dwarka, he told me that the shilas, the sacred bricks, were just thrown around and that people were using these bricks as stepping stones to cross dirty nullahs. It's obvious that they used religious feelings to make money.

Q. When you say they, you mean the Vishwa Hindu Parishad?

A. The VHP and their political friends (smiles).

pressed criticism of the security arrangements provided to you by the new Government. Do you yourselffeel vulnerable in any way?

A. I have never felt vulnerable nor restricted in my movements. It has never bothered me.

Q. Do you now have more time to spend with the family?

A. I find I have less time for everything. The assembly elections came so soon and there is still so much work to be done.

HDW SUBMARINE DEAL

The Scandal Surfaces

Prime Minister V.P. Singh resigned from Rajiv Gandhi's government in April 1987 after-in his capacity as defence minister—he ordered an investigation of possible pay-offs in the purchase of HDW submarines from a West German company. Even though the previous government exonerated itself. reports of wrongdoing persisted. Encouraged by the progress

made in the Bofors investigations, the Government ordered the CBI last fortnight to reopen the HDW case. After a preliminary investigation of government files, the CBI concluded: "There has been a dishonest or fraudulent diversion of funds of the Government of India." Charges have been filed and some important heads are likely to roll. An exclusive inside story.



N February 1979, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA), the apex body for approval of all international contracts, met under the stewardship of the then prime minister Morarji Desai and approved the acquisition of submarineto-submarine killers (SSK) for the Indian Navy with a diving depth of 350 metres. The ccpa stipulated that the Indian Navy would pay for the transfer of technology and the indigenous co-production of four submarines, at an estimated cost of Rs 350 crore.

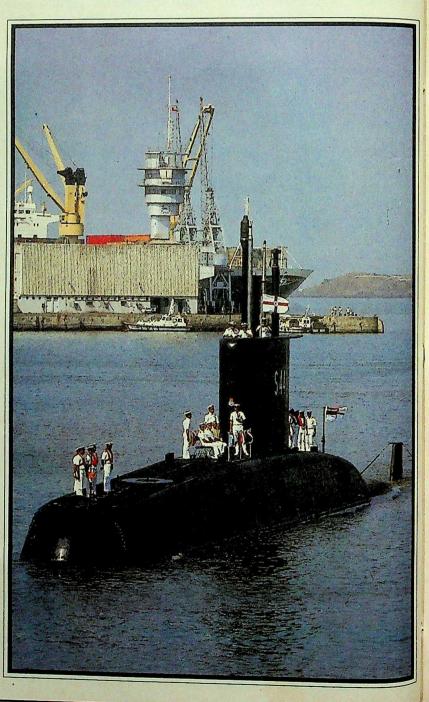
The same month, a nine-member negotiating committee, headed by additional secretary of defence M.K. Mukherjee, shortlisted four offers: the Kockums being pushed by a Swedish firm, the West German HDW, the Italian Sauro and TNSW-1400.

Following clearance by the Cabinet, the vice-chief of naval staff appointed a six-member expert committee headed by Rear Admiral S.L. Sethi, that included Captain M. Kondath, who was the director (submarines) in March, 1979.

On May 16, the Sethi committee submitted its report to the vice-chief of naval staff. It gave the Swedish 45-Kockums first preference followed closely by the Italian Sauro submarine. Among the offers rejected at that time by this committee was that of West Germany's HDW because it had a diving depth of only 250 metres which was far short of the stated requirement of 350 metres.

But barely a month later, on June 15. HDW resurfaced as one of the contenders. The committee put HDW on its list with the proviso that it would be considered along with the others if it could improve its diving depth.

In the same month, a delegation of



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officials from various ministries headed by Rear Admiral D.S. Painthal and including Captain Kondath, visited various shipyards in Europe and the US to survey the available options. The delegation firmly arrived at the conclusion that the best available product for the Indian Navy was the Kockums offered by the Swedes.

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At about this juncture Indian politics underwent an upheaval. The Morarji Desai government bowed out of office and Charan Singh took over as prime minister of the country. With that also changed the composition of the CCPA.

UT by this time, the Defence Ministry had prepared a draft paper for the CCPA listing the Kockums as the best buy at a cost of Rs 318 crore as against the more expensive HDW. The paper also recommended that the negotiating team should be reconstituted so that a quick and final selection could be made. But because of the political uncertainty at that time, the CCPA was unable to meet.

When it finally did meet-in early 1980-it was presided over by Mrs Indira Gandhi who had returned to power.

Since no selection had yet been made, all competing companies extended their offers until June 30, 1980. Routinely, the Defence Ministry forwarded its proposal in which Kockums and HDW were shortlisted, to the new government. It also recommended that the negotiating committee should be headed by the secretary, defence production.

On April 10 of that year, the CCPA met under Mrs Gandhi. It approved the shortlisting of both Kockums and HDW. But it left the reconstitution of the committee to the prime minister.

When the original committee finally met on April 14, it was presided over not by the secretary but by S.S. Sidhu who had joined the Defence Ministry as its additional secretary. There was no written directive on this development from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and no official record of how Sidhu came to take charge.

Sidhu simply appeared at the meeting and announced that the CCPA had decided to constitute a new seven-member negotiating committee with him as chairman. Again, except for Sidhu's word, there is no record of this decision in government files. Other members of the committee were-B.M. Menon, financial adviser (defence services); S.K. Banerjee, solicitor, Ministry of Law; Vice-Admiral M.R. Schunker; Lt-General S.G. Payara, who was also chief co-ordinator (R&D); joint secretary D.N. Prashad; and Vice-Admiral N.R. Dutta, who was then chief of the Mazagon Docks.

From this point on the submarime deal took a new turn.

In May, 1980, the Sidhu committee toured Germany and Sweden. On May 17, 1980, the committee convened a formal meeting and made a sudden switchfrom Kockums to HDW. The Kockums cost was now evaluated to have gone up to Rs403 crore against Rs332 crore for HDW.

On June 30, 1980, a week after the death of Sanjay Gandhi, the CCPA met and approved Sidhu's recommendation for placing an order for the HDW. But it also directed the committee to hold further negotiations. Sidhu was shortly replaced by S.K. Bhatnagar who for all intents and purposes presided over the proceedings and saw the deal through. It was finally signed on December 11, 1981.

The contract stipulated that four HDW submarines would be delivered at a total cost-that included the price of torpedoes-of Rs 465 crore after six years, by the end of 1987. Two more submarines. the contract said, would be ordered at a later date.

But by mid-1987 only two submarines had been delivered. And by this time, V.P. Singh was defence minister in the Rajiv Gandhi government. He received information that the Germans may have overcharged India and ordered that attempts should be made to renegotiate the prices and bring them down for the remaining two submarines.

That's when the first depth charge exploded. On February 24, 1987, J.C. Ajmani, India's ambassador in Bonn, sent a secret telegram to the Government saying that the Germans were not inclined to reduce the price because included in it was a 7 per cent commission they had paid to secure the contract.

Singh first saw this communication in April 1987 and ordered an immediate inquiry. And this started not only his dramatic break with Rajiv Gandhi but also the political fireworks which were to make history for the next two years. On April 12, three days after Singh ordered the inquiry, he resigned from the Government.



THE CBI was to file a first information report (FIR) in a New Delhi court listing seven names as the main accused in a criminal conspiracy to clinch the deal in favour of the HDW. They include: former defence secretary Bhatnagar; S.S. Sidhu, currently holding the prestigious post of secretary-general, International Civil Aviation Organisation; Captain Kondath; B.S. Ramaswamy, a former financial adviser to the Defence Ministry; directors and agents of HDW; directors and agents of AEG-T West Germany, a firm which supplied torpedoes for the submarine; and directors of Ferrostaal, another German company which was involved in negotiating the early stages of the deal.

The key allegations are:

- ▶ Indian civil servants failed to take a firm stand against HDW during the negotiations and accepted it's unreasonable financial demands.
- ▶ Defence Ministry officials wrongly

JUGGLING THE FIGURES

		SEPTEMBER 1979		MAY 1980	
	MAX. MARKS	KOCKUMS 45-B	HDW 1500	KOCKUMS 45-B	HDW 1500
BEST SUBMARINE	2000	1700	1640	1716	1709
MAINTENANCE AND LOGISTIC SUPPORT	800	685	675	645	695
TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY	1200	1085	1050	1060	1130
TOTAL POINTS	4000	3470	3365	3421	3534
COST OF FOUR SUBMARINES (in crores)		318.79 (including to	336.81 orpedoes)	403	332

calculated the total cost of the HDW offer which led to cost-overruns from the initial estimate of Rs 332 crore to Rs 465 crore. ▶ Senior officials and the members of the committee changed various technical and financial parameters in such a way

that HDW, which was second all along, came first.

▶ HDW, AEG-T and Ferrostaal changed their earlier price quotations and did not inform the government about the role played by Indian agents.



The present secretary-general of the International Civil Aviation Organisation at Montreal, S.S. Sidhu, 60, has been named as the prime accused in the FIR. According to the CBI, Sidhu manipulated the financial and technical details of various offers to ensure that HDW emerged as the winner.

Sidhu is accused of assigning himself the role of the negotiating committee chairman in April 1980. His undocumented appointment was accepted as a fait accompli. Sidhu is charged with not only concealing unfavourable recommendations by experts on the HDW submarines, but also misinforming the CCPA PRASHANT PANJIAR

that the Germans were willing to sign a memorandum of under-

appointed adviser to the Tamil Nadu governor by the Rajiv Gandhi regime. Last year, the previous government sponsored him for a still more attractive assignment in which he earns \$6,000 (over Rs 1 lakh) per month tax free, along with a palatial house in Montreal, Canada.

Shashi Kant Bhatnagar, 59, who recently resigned as Sikkim governor following the change of government at the Centre, was to be named the second accused in the FIR. He is already under investigation for his role in the Bofors deal.

Bhatnagar replaced Sidhu as additional secretary, defence, at the end of 1980 and was responsible for finalising

the absence of sensitive data held back by the German Government.

Bhatnagar refused to divulge these concerns to the CCPA on the premise that it would cause "all round embarrassment" The CBI came to the conclusion that "Bhatnagar by conceding unreasonable demands of the HDW caused financial gain to the company at the expense of the Indian Government."

But the most serious allegation against Bhatnagar is that after he became the defence secretary, he was cabled by the Indian ambassador in Bonn, I.C. Ajmani, on February 24, 1987, that a secret 7 per cent commission had been paid to Indian agents in the deal. Bhatnagar made a notation on that cable. It says: "They (HDW) will be inclined to rescind the agreement of-7 per cent commission only. They may argue that it is due to the act of the Government." This note, which was erased from the cable with a white fluid before it was forwarded to the defence minister, was tantamount to an admission by Bhatnagar that a commission was paid in the deal—in sharp contrast to his later stand that the Government was unaware of any commissions. The deciphering of this note by the CBI through a chemical process has strength-

ened its case against Bhatnagar. another allegation

Sidhu is charged with manipulating the financial and technical details of the various offers.

standing on transfer of technology. In fact, the Germans, out of NATO security compulsions, were loath to do so and eventually did not.

Sidhu is also accused of including other concessions from the German company, such as spare parts, in such a way that the HDW package became cheaper than the Swedish Kockum (see table). According to the original negotiations. the four Kockums were for Rs 318.79 crore as against Rs 336.81 crore quoted by the HDW in February 1979.

The CBI concluded in its internal assessment that "Shri Sidhu, additional secretary, desence, prepared a hasty drast for the CCPA in which wrong projection of financial and technical evaluation along with distorted version of FRG Government support to the HDW deal was done to cause undue favours to the HDW".

When Sidhu retired in 1987, he was

the deal. He is accused of rejecting suggestions by negotiating committee members to place the deal afresh before the CCPA in view of the radically altered financial and technical parameters.

For example, in a meeting held on October 18, 1980, presided over by Bhatnagar, vice-Admiral M.R. Schunker made it clear that the HDW's technical specifications were not acceptable to the navy. Schunker also suggested that in view of HDW's adamant attitude, the Government should reopen dialogue with the Swedes. He noted that the HDW submarine's diving depth was 250 metres as against the navy's stated requirement of 350 metres. In another meeting in November, Schunker pointed out that the sur torpedo to be supplied by another company, AEG-T, could not be evaluated in

According to the CBI, Bhatnagar conceded unreasonable demands by HDW.

against Bhatnagar is that he did not inform the Government

about his meeting in New Delhi with a Dr Monitor, a senior West German defence official, and Mr Rathjens, managing director of HDW on February 27, 1987, three days after Ajmani's cable arrived. It was during this meeting, the CBI suspects, that the Germans and Bhatnagar conspired to take the official line that no commissions had been paid. The CBI, incidentally, has also discovered that the person who first informed ambassador Ajmani of the commissions was none other than Dr Monitor.

Captain M. Kondath left the service after the deal was signed in 1981. According to the CBI report, Kondath in his official capacity as director (submarine armament) played a key role in manipulating various figures in favour of HDW.

He was also member of the technical team which assessed the deal and the other pointe Hehas the Ko which

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other offers. In June 1980, he was appointed officer on special duty, SSK project. He has been accused of inflating the cost of the Kockums deal by including in it items which were not the part of the offer.

HE major accusation is that he favoured HDW in order to secure a job with the German company after his retirement from the navy. Surprisingly, Kondath applied for premature retirement in September, 1980, two months after the CCPA had approved the HDW deal. In his application, he said he was seeking retirement so that he could attend to his family and business in Coimbatore.

He retired on December 31, 1981. But within a month, he sought government approval to join HDW as its Delhi-based consultant for the implementation of the SSK project. Even though he was refused permission by the Defence Ministry, he continued accompanying AET (the torpedo supplier) representatives to the Defence Ministry till 1985. And when Ferrostaal (a trading front company for HDW) opened its office in Delhi in 1985. Kondath joined the group. The CBI has charged him with "abusing his official position for favouring the HDW in order to gain future employment later on at a very high salary".

B.S. Ramaswamy was working as financial adviser to the Defence Ministry when the deal was being negotiated and finally signed. He was in charge of making a comparative cost-benefit analysis of the financial packages offered by HDW and Kockums.

The cBI has charged Ramaswamy of deliberately inflating the Kockums offer and thereby making HDW appear less expensive. He accomplished this, the FIR states, by applying a cost escalation formula to even the static cost of the transfer of technical know-how offered by

Kockums. This company had priced this transfer cost at Rs 25.49 crore. The cost was to remain constant irrespective of the date of signing of the final agreement.

Even the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in its report to Parliament in March 1989, concluded that the Kockums deal was, in fact, cheaper than HDW by Rs 18.25 crore. The PAC disclosed that the fixed portion of price for know-how "relating to the offer of Kockums (Rs 25 crore) was wrongly included in the figures to be escalated". According to the CBI's calculations, the total project cost of Kockums would have been Rs 313.75 crore and not the Rs 349 crore worked out by Ramaswamy. But based on his own financial legerdemain, Ramaswamy had concluded that the HDW offer was cheaper by Rs 5.82 crore. The Government justified its final decision to buy the HDW on the basis of Ramaswamy's calculation.

-PRABHU CHAWLA

F the success recently achieved by the threemember cbi team—led by Bhure Lal, joint secretary in the Prime Minister's Office

(РМО)—during its first visit to Switzerland last month is any indication, the secrecy surrounding the Bofors pay-offs will soon be lifted.

The Swiss authorities not only froze the five accounts into which the money had been paid directly, they also ordered the freezing of another account into which money from the five accounts had gone. It is the identity of the real owner of this sixth account—held in a little known financial company, Pictet and Company, in Geneva-that is crucial for solving the Bofors mystery.

Speculation has already begun about the owner of this account in which a substantial sum—more than the total Bofors commission—is still lying. Predictably, the needle of suspi-

cion points towards Ajitabh Bachchan as both Arcolab Arcopharma—firms owned by him-have an account in Pictet and Company. The Bachchans, however, have denied any link with the account and have even alleged a conspiracy to forge documents against them.

Notwithstanding allegation, the CBI is forging ahead with its investigations. It has served notices twice on Win Chadha and G.P. Hinduja to depose before it.

The Noose Tightens

But both of them are avoiding a personal appearance. While Chadha is elusive about his future action, Hinduja wants to be interrogated in London and not in New Delhi because he fears arrest. Says Hinduja: "My lawyers have already responded to the second letter. The first letter sent by my lawyers has still not been replied to by the CBI nor have they been furnished with the copy of the FIR.'

Chadha and Hinduja are not the only ones under pressure. The CBI is also questioning the former defence secretary S.K. Bhatnagar and other officials involved with the deal. Former army chief K. Sundarji also met various officials of the Defence Ministry and the PMO and gave them useful leads.

Hinduja (left) and Bachchan: prime suspects





Simultaneously, the Government is applying pressure on both the Swiss and the Swedes hoping that at least one would yield results. It

gave priority to the Swiss Government with which it had signed a memorandum of understanding under which the Swiss were bound to provide information on cases which were regarded as crimes under Swiss law.

The Government also sent an aide memoire to the Swedish Government early last month requesting it to extend help to the visiting CBI team. In a fivepage secret document, it requested Sweden to make available the secret parts of the reports of the Swedish National Audit Bureau that deal with the exact payments made by Bofors to the intermediaries.

It also requested the Swedes to make available "all other materials and details concerning the precise amount

> paid, the services for which these amounts were paid, the names and addresses of the real recipients which might be available with the Government of Sweden, Swedish banks and other agencies".

The investigating officials are confident they will be able to extract information from Bhatnagar and others. But the final battle for uncovering the scam will be fought not on Indian soil, but overseas.

-PRABHU CHAWLA



VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH

Style and Substance

The prime minister continues to captivate the crowds

HE title: Star Trek II. The star: V.P. Singh. Last fortnight, it was the old odyssey all over again, albeit in a slightly different version. The now-familiar motorcade trundled through hamlet after dusty hamlet and the crowds materialised from thin air, held spellbound by the simple little homilies, the snatches of self-penned verse and the gentle chiding that has become V.P. Singh's campaign trademark.

If anything, the response is more exuberant and the performance more accomplished. Three months ago, he toured these hamlets, hammering away at the then ruling party and promising all things to all people. But there is a difference this time. He is now prime minister and the dignity of the office has tempered his electoral rhetoric. And transformed him as an orator. He is no great speaker but he has acquired an easy, avuncular way of communicating with the crowd.

This is his greatest political asset now. For V.P. Singh, reinforcing his image as a man of the people is of crucial importance and his no-frills campaign was tailored around precisely that. In his inimitable Allahabadi diction, he comes across as sober and sincere and a man who clearly has a finger on the pulse of the people.

His campaign speeches no longer jeer at Rajiv Gandhi; he does not even mention his predecessor by name. He has stopped indulging in the question-answer sessions. He even refuses to dwell on the Bofors scandal. At Dungarpur in Rajasthan, some youths in the audience insisted that he speak on the scandal. "Main political Bofors ki baat kar raha hun (I'm talking about corruption in politics)," he chided them. What he retains in his speeches is the old sarcasm mixed with poetry penned in his youth.

The snatches of poetry are a clever ploy, containing as they do, contempo-

rary significance. Lamenting the lot of women, he says: "chula aur chakki mein bandhi rahti hain" (The women remain bound to house and hearth). In tribal areas, his favourite phrase is: "Adivasi as mein ho jata hai antvasi'' (The tribal in effect has become the peripheral man). But the basic strategy is simple and effective: to explain the issues facing his government and in a language the rural masses understand. Even if they don't, the impact is evident. At Parsad near Udaipur, he spoke to a rural crowd on issues like the foreign debt, the five-year plan and why the BJP and the Left support his government. It is doubtful if the rough-hewn farmers and village women understood much of what he said, but they heard him in rapt attention. As one of them put it later. "There is sincerity in his voice."

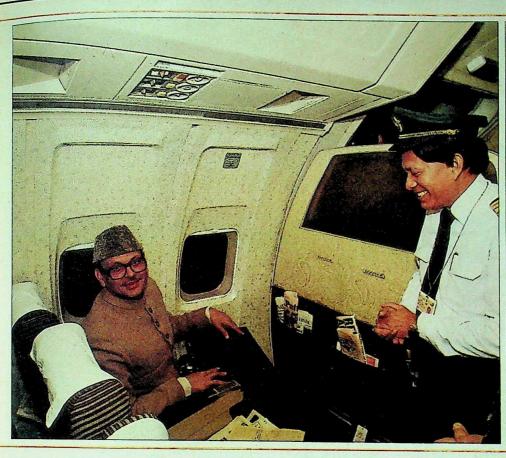
That is a major weapon in terms of his campaign's electoral effectiveness. There are hardly any posters of him and he uses

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"For me the prime minister's office is a contingency, but people are permanent".

"I decided to travel by road so that I could have a closer look at the people and their problems".

"The prime minister's picture must not be the identity of the Government".

"Even the prime minister can be censored by the Lok Pal".

this to his advantage. "The prime minister's picture must not be the identity of a government. If some overzealous officials have already hung my picture in their offices, you must throw it away.'

Without directly referring to Rajiv, he nonetheless makes subtle and telling points. "A Congress(I) chief minister reads the morning paper with trepidation lest he should have been changed overnight." Or, "I decided to travel from Delhi to Ahmedabad by road so that I could have a closer look at the people and their problems. It is, however, a different matter that the opposition leader is still flying helicopters and chartered planes."

HE prime minister's cavalcade consists of half a dozen Ambassador and Contessa cars carrying a handful of Special Protection Group personnel and only one personal aide. At the circuit houses where he stays overnight, he is accessible to everybody. There are no hangers-on or local party bosses. Said a Rajasthan Police official in Dungarpur: "We would have had a more trying time even if a state minister put up here.

Even his choice of route reflects his projection as a man of the people. Many are remote backwoods like Ashpur on the Gujarat-Rajasthan border which has

Singh in Rajasthan; and travelling Indian Airlines: close rapport

never seen a VIP, let alone the prime minister. Said Ram Lakhan, a farmer in Ashpur: "He is the first prime minister to visit this place in 42 years." As Singh told INDIA TODAY: "I have come to office from the people and not the other way round."

Obviously, Singh is subtly contrasting Rajiv's high-flying opulent style with his down-to-earth image. Therefore, at every meeting he harps on the significance of the Lok Pal bill. "Even the prime minister can be censored by the Lok Pal," he stresses. Realising that his clean image is his strongest selling point, Singh's idea is to embellish it further, travelling by regular Indian Airlines flights as often as possible. And, despite the inconvenience caused by the security checks, the passengers break into spontaneous applause as soon as he enters the aircraft.

There is, of course, a larger strategy involved. For a prime minister heading a minority government, nothing can be more reassuring than an endorsement from the people. Singh acknowledges as much: "For me the (prime minister's) office is a contingency, but the people are something permanent." Further, the Janata Dal organisation is virtually nonexistent everywhere in the eight states going to the polls this time. In the elections, thus, it is almost totally dependent on Singh's crowd-pulling ability.

Consequently, Singh sidesteps tricky issues, like the many multi-cornered contests involving the Janata Dal and the BIP. in his deliberately vague manner. It is also ironic that Singh is taking a page out of Rajiv's book in propagating the Panchayati Raj's efficacy. The panchayat system for him is the panacea for ills plaguing women, youth and other socially backward people. It can ensure "jiski pida, uska pratikar" (solutions from the sufferers).

For the moment, however, both he and his audience are clearly speaking what Singh calls the "language of rapport". As he criss-crossed one constituency after the other in the Hindi belt, there were impenetrable human walls on both sides of the road. The entire population of the area seemed to be out on the streets. At the end of his speech at Sabarmati in Gujarat, two local Janata Dal workers climbed up the rostrum to put a colourful turban on his head. In a master stroke, he held the turban in his hands and turned to the audience: "Is pagdi ka maan to aap rakhenge?" (Would you honour this turban?). Expectedly, the answer was a tumultuous roar. -BHASKAR ROY

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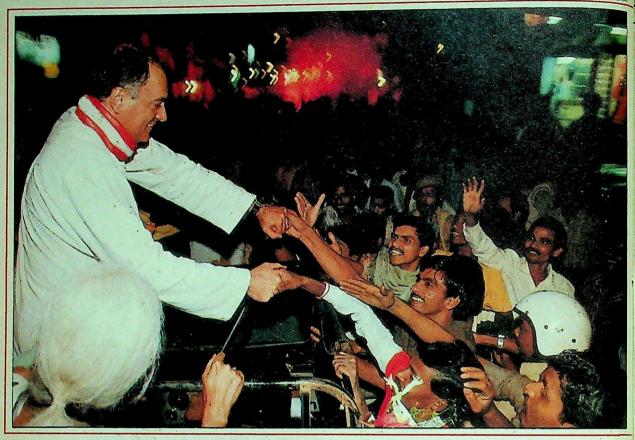
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RAJIV GANDHI

Mellowed Mien

Defeat has made Rajiv Gandhi a friendlier and less arrogant campaigner

ACT II. Scene I. The plane taxies in on the runway. A beaming Rajiv Gandhi emerges from, this time, a private flying club six-seater Kingair plane. A group of Congress(I) workers surges forward, garlands in hand. Shouts of "Rajiv Gandhi zindabad" rent the air. Policemen form a circle around Rajiv as he heads for the waiting Ambassador car. A slamming of doors, a screeching siren and the cavalcade speeds off to the venue of his public rally.

A few minutes before he arrives at the venue, a securityman—wireless in hand—rushes to the podium and announces: "He'll be here any minute." Taking the cue, the one dozen Congress(I) workers already on stage, exhort the public to repeat after them: "Desh ka neta Rajiv Gandhi" (Leader of the nation, Rajiv Gandhi). The neta arrives. A second round of garlands and he charges up the stairs, waving to the crowds. He settles

down in a chair and waits for the ritual to unfold. Speeches by the chief minister and the PCC(I) chief follow; it's another 30 minutes before Rajiv takes the mike.

And once he begins his speech the changes are all too visible. The cocky, arrogant air of Rajiv Gandhi the prime minister has gone. Instead, there is a friendlier, closer-to-reality Rajiv Gandhi, the leader of the Opposition. Flashes of the 1984 charisma surface as he smiles at the crowd, waves to children and folds his hands in a namaskar while looking at the section where women are seated. "Defeat certainly seems to have done him some good," declares a senior police officer at the Jodhpur rally, who'd seen him at the same venue three months ago.

The confident swagger has given way to a man who smiles almost apologetically at the audience. A man who is trying to reach out and strike a rapport with them. He begins his speech with these words:

"Aap ne humko dhakka lagaya" (You have given the Congress(I) a jolt). The crowd softens to this new humble stance. They cheer when he tells them: "We fared badly in the north and so decided not to form the Government." And then comes the cliched utterings of all politicians: "Our commitment is to you and to the nation's integrity and for that we don't need to be in power."

Crowd interest begins to wane. Regardless, Rajiv launches forth on his pet theme—Bharat ki izzat (the nation's honour: unity and integrity)—which he'd hammered at unsuccessfully during the November general elections. For most part of his 35-minute speech, he talks about Punjab, Kashmir and Pakistan.

Be it Bihar, Orissa, Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat or Madhya Pradesh, Rajiv goes on and on about distant Punjab and the National Front Government's "dismal performance" in handling terrorism

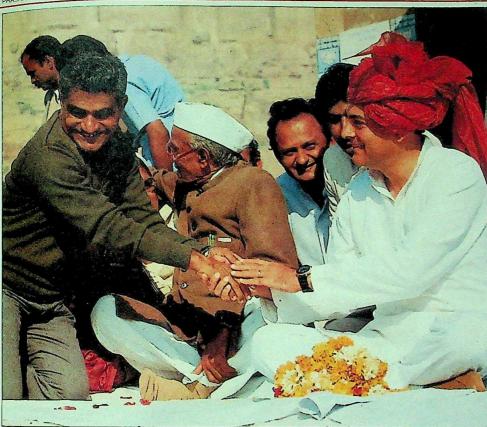
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PRASHANT PANJIAR



"Aap ne humko dhakka lagaya'' (You have given the Congress(I) a jolt).

"We fared badly in the north and so decided not to form the Government."

"Khalistan panchayats are being set up in Punjab. The terrorists are getting bolder and stocking arms in gurdwaras. As many as 400 people have been killed in the last 10 weeks."

"Khalistan panchayats are being set up in Punjab. The terrorists are getting bolder and stocking arms in gurdwaras. As many as 400 people have been killed in the last 10 weeks," he roars. The crowd remains unmoved.

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AJIV then tries conversing with them: "The Punjab governor sent repeated messages to the prime minister (he never mentions V.P. Singh's name). Do you know what he replied? 'Hum soch ke batayenge (We will think about it)'." Looking at some youth, he asks: "Aap bataye, Khalistaniyon ko arrest karne mein bhi kya sochna parta he? Das hafte beet gaye, abhi tak koi jawab nahi. Kitna waqt lagna chahye?" (You tell me, how long does it take to arrest Punjab terrorists). "Ek second" (one second) replies one youth. And Rajiv has found the excuse he was looking for to launch a diatribe against the Government.

While the crowd response may not have been exactly ecstatic, Rajiv was, at least, not being booed like he was in November-when scores of his public meetings were cancelled for want of crowds. "Votes toh ab bhi nahi milegi" (But even this time we won't get votes), declared a Madhya Pradesh Congressman, adding: "The degree of hostility

Rajiv (left) in Cuttack; and in Jodhpur

towards Rajiv seems to have come down by about 10 per cent."

Though the people's response has changed only marginally, there is a drastic change in Rajiv's campaign style. Gone are the bullet-proof glass and bullet-proof vest. Gone too is the coterie that once accompanied him everywhere. The likes of V. George, Mani Shankar Aiyar, and Satish Sharma have been replaced by kurta-pyjama clad Congressmen.

Explained a party leader who accompanied Rajiv on the campaign trail: "He suffered a rude shock in November and that has made him a wiser man. He knows better than to expect votes from the Hindi heartland. He knows that the only hope for the Congress(I) is in Arunachal Pradesh, Pondicherry and perhaps Maharashtra. Yes, what Rajiv does seem to have realised is the immense power of the people.'

It is, perhaps, because of this that in the midst of his gruelling schedule—a dozen meetings daily for a fortnight, beginning from 7 a.m. to well past midnight-Rajiv would, every now and then, break past the security barricade. After a thinly-attended meeting in Chodwar, Orissa, Rajiv-sans a bullet proof vestclimbed into an open jeep and drove through the city of Cuttack into neighbouring Bhubaneswar. Though it was past 10 p.m., men, women and children poured into the streets and surged towards the jeep-that nearly toppled over at one point. As people jostled with each other to shake hands or simply touch the former prime minister. Rajiv himself appeared somewhat taken aback. But he quickly rose to the occasion, and jumped into the crowd to save them from a lathicharge that a nervous police force was about to resort to. The same story was repeated in the neighbouring state of Bihar, where Rajiv actually deigned to travel from Patna to Gaya in a passenger train. Each time the train pulled into a station, he was mobbed.

At such times Rajiv appeared once again the people's hero—the prime minister who had received the biggest mandate ever in the history of independent India. And for those brief moments, when the crowds would mob him and cries of "Rajiv Gandhi zindabad" rent the air, he seemed transported to another world. Away from the grim reality of losing most of the states in the north. Distant also from the prospect of a revolt in the party-a reality he may soon have to wake up to.

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Poll Vignettes

The colour, the oddities, the trends that marked the recent assembly elections in some states

MAHARASHTRA

TAMING THE TIGER

Tigers don't always get the better of worms. So discovered Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray after describing journalists as "owls" and "earthworms" at a recent rally in the Marathwada region—much in the illustrious manner of R. Gundu Rao and A.R. Antulay, who had termed scribes as



"sons of toddy-tappers" and "scorpions" during their chief ministership. Predictably, the journalists displayed no owl-like wisdom and ignored the remarks, but instead cackled like crows, insisting Thackeray apologise. They even returned the Rs1 lakh Thackeray had given last year to the building fund of the local press association.

As the electoral battle hotted up, Thackeray modified his remarks—one of his MPs, Vidyadhar Gokhale is, after all, a respected Marathi journalist and the Sena supremo must have realised that bravura can prove costly if it fetches bad press. The tiger's roar soon tapered off into a tame mew.

POLL GRAMMAR

■ Two months before the assembly polls, Maharashtra's Congress(I) Chief Minister Sharad Pawar had aroused the ire of opposition parties by unleashing a publicity blitz that harped on the greatness of Maharashtra, and blurred the distinction between party and the state. But unlike the Congress(I)'s disastrous overkill preceding the general elections (remember the beating

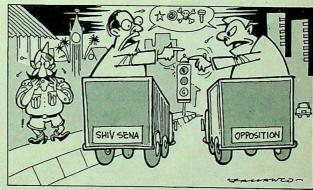


heart?), Pawar's advertisements were singularly unique for their incorrect English. Sample: "Where were they? When Mahatma Phule welcome all to draw from his well?" But the Janata Dal wasn't going to let the Congress(I) best them on the strength of bad grammar. The posters of the Dal candidate for Bombay's Colaba constituency, Usha Tripathi, told voters: "Vote anybody but vote Usha Tripathi." In bewilderment reeled the voters: did she want their votes or not?

CROSSROADS CHAOS

Traffic lights may regulate traffic, but they also precipitate skirmishes. In the thick of electioneering, a Bp-Shiv Sena van came cruising along Gokhale Road in congested central Bombay, exhorting Hindus to respond to the call of the conch. On the other side of the road came a van of the 'secular' opposition party, the Peasants and Workers' Party. Suddenly, the signal turned red—and the stage was set for a modern-day Mahabharata.

As commuters caught in the crossfire ducked, workers from both sides let loose verbal *brahmastras*. Accusations flung included: "You were responsible for the Bhiwandi riots," or



"You did nothing at all for 10 years in the Opposition." Like the battle of Kurukshetra, this war of words would have gone on to the 18th day. But suddenly the signal turned green and the Shiv Sena-BJP combine—which sees red each time it sees green—fled from the battlefield.

BOFORS KING

■ Bhure Lal and company need to know of this. They would do well to unleash the sleuths of the Central Bureau of Investigation not only in the rarefied atmosphere of Sweden and Switzerland, but also in the humid backwaters of Maharashtra.

For if the Bhrashtachar Nirmulan Yuva Sangharsh Samiti is to be believed, the elusive middleman who siphoned off the kickbacks in the controversial Bofors howitzer gun deal has finally been unearthed.



The samiti claims this dubious beneficiary is none other than Ranjit Deshmukh, a minister of state from Maharashtra, who contested the elections this time from the Saoner assembly constituency.

In a pamphlet, the samiti declared that Deshmukh was the "Bofors King", and accused him of amassing Rs 50 crore (not Rs 64 crore, the alleged sum of the pay-off in the Bofors deal) through underhand means.

WILD PROMISES

Among the many wild promises that thickened the electoral air, Bal Thackeray's assurance to policemen must certainly rank as the most original. At a rally, he promised the force a regular supply of tobacco and *chuna* at police stations, so that policemen stopped hanging around paan shops. Predictably, quipped the wag: the stations could then become legitimate paan shops.



GUJARAT

CATCALLS FOR CHIMANBHAI

Even the Achilleses of today's world have vulnerable heels. Gujarat Janata Dal chief Chimanbhai Patel may be the strongman of Gujarat, but his murky past—particularly his ouster from the chief ministership by the 1974 Navnirman stir following charges of corruption—continues to haunt him. And each election time, skeletons threaten to come tumbling



out of his cupboard.

This time too Patel had his moments of embarrassment. At a huge Ahmedabad rally, one of the party's star campaigners canvassing along with Patel shouted: "Gali gali mein shor hai," expecting the crowd to complete the slogan with: "Rajiv Gandhi chor hai." But the response was humbling. Roaring back came the popular slogan of the Navnirman agitation: "Chimanbhai chor hai."

CASH CHARMS

He believes not only in people's power, but also in people's money. The fund collection drives of Ashok Bhatt, a sitting BJP legislator from Gujarat's Khadia constituency, for contesting elections are becoming legendary. Bhatt, who was renominated by his party, always has several tricks up his sleeve, when it come to collecting cash. In earlier elections, he'd go from shop to shop with folded hands, collecting money, followed by supporters who would promptly issue receipts for each donation. During the recent Lok Sabha polls, he hopped

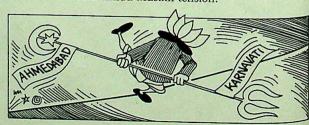
from town to town with a *jhola* and raised Rs 1.25 lakh—plus ornaments—for his party.

This time round he decided to cut down on personal exertion. With supreme confidence in his lucre-attracting charm, Bhatt placed a donations drum in the heart of Khadia, labelled hoondi peti (kitty box). In less than 10 days, the box yielded Rs 20,000, with donations ranging from 50 paise to Rs 100. Bhatt's target: over Rs 50,000. Said he: "My aim is to involve people in the fight for value-based politics." Whether the people finally get value for their money remains to be seen.



THE RENAMING GAME

What's in a name? Much for the BJP, it seems. Consider the recent renaming of Ahmedabad to Karnavati by the BJP-controlled Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. Legend has it that the city was Karnavati before Sultan Ahmed Shah changed its name to Ahmedabad. On election eve, with the aim of wooing fundamentalist Hindus, the BJP renamed Ahmedabad, ignoring protests from both the Janata Dal and the Congress(I) camps. Whether it fetches the extra vote or not, in a city known for communal riots, the move is bound to increase Hindu-Muslim tension.



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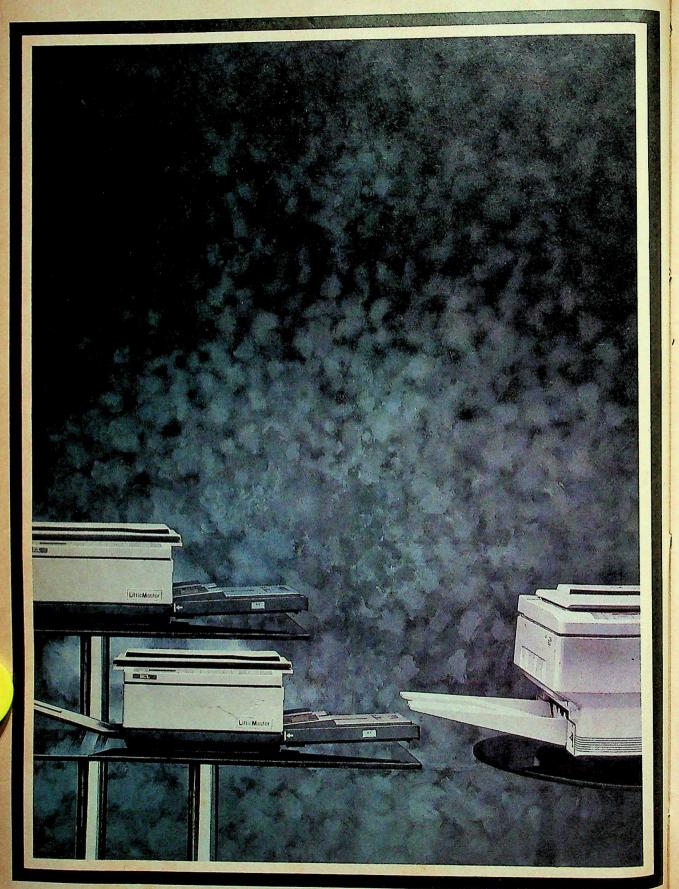
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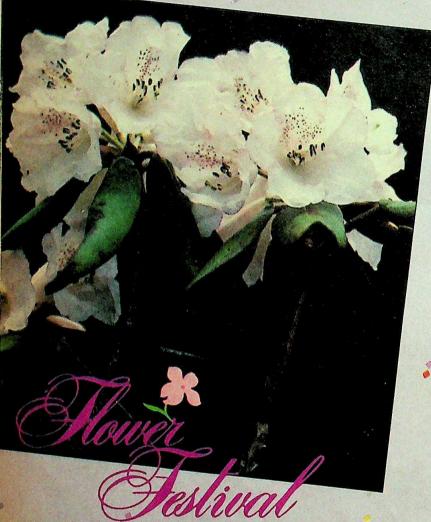
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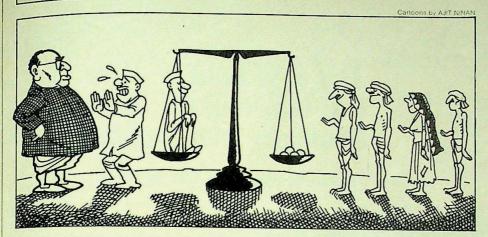
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MADHYA PRADESH



Rajiv hardsell during the recent Lok Sabha polls, leaving the state unit of the party without a leader to project. Chief Minister S.C. Shukla thought he fitted the frame and promptly released advertisements carrying his own picture. But PCC(1) chief Arjun Singh thought otherwise. He released posters that carried pictures of neither Rajiv Gandhi nor Shukla. And obviously having been brought down a peg or two by recent setbacks to his political career, he chose not to project himself as well. Instead, post-

ers released by the former chief minister carried a picture of an anonymous tribal woman. Whether the woman attracted votes for the Congress(I) or not, what seems clear is that photogenic party leaders are a dwindling tribe.

VOTE POR CO

SWEET STRATEGY

■ Some election campaigns have bite because they appeal to one's sweet tooth. In some parts of Madhya Pradesh, posters, rallies, speeches and pamphlets were relegated to second spot by laddoos this election. And the favourite Indian sweet was a campaign weapon that cut across party lines. If Babulal Gaur of the BJP got himself weighed against laddoos at Bhopal, Manohar Bairagi of the Congress(I) did so at Ujjain. The laddoos were then distributed among the spectators. Naturally, the heavier the candidate, the happier the people. The killjoys said this style of campaigning amounted to bribery. The rest, of course, had their mouths full.

PICTURE PROBLEMS

The picture was the problem for the Congress(I) in Madhya Pradesh this time. The party experienced a severe image problem and was at a loss about whose pictures to use in campaign posters. The electorate had clearly not bought the

ORISSA



BALLOON BINGE

Many Oriya voters were looking skywards during the poll as if manna was about to fall from the heavens. In the event, it was not the Biblical stuff, but plain old money that was for the having. Since nothing attracts attention like Bofors, the local unit of the Bharat Mukti Morcha had got its President Sarat Routray to ceremoniously release 101 balloons, christened 'Bofors balloons' on February 16. Eleven of these balloons had, what the Morcha called 'Bofors tags' with names of kickback recipients written on them. The Morcha promised a reward to all those who could find the so-called Bofors balloons. The Prizes: "A kickback of Rs 501, for each of the 11 balloons."

NANDINI'S HUSBAND

Being the husband of Nandini Satpathy, the high-profile Orissa PCC(1) chief, must always have been demanding-particularly when people tend to call you Mr Nandini Satpathy. And recently this gentleman's woes were aggravated by his wife contesting the elections on a Congress(I) ticket and his 32-yearold younger son Tathagata contesting as a Janata Dal candidate. To add to the problems of Debendrababu—as prefers to be called-mother and son were in the fray from two adjoining



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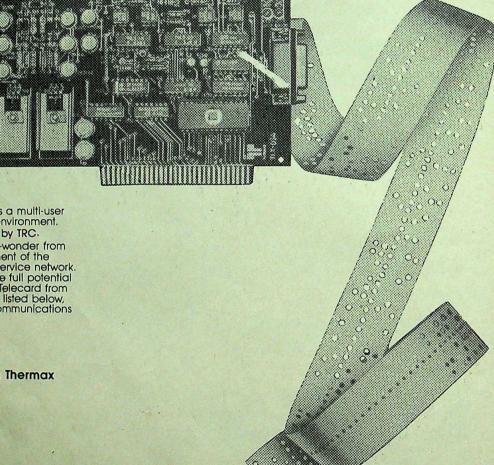
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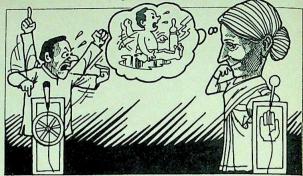
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constituencies in Dhenkanal district: Nandini from Gondia and Tathagata from Dhenkanal Sadar.

But Debendrababu did not abandon one for the other. Nor did he duck the crisis of allegiance. He deftly walked the tightrope by moving into his ancestral home in Dhenkanal town, and becoming the campaign manager for both. By day he looked after the logistics of Tathagata's campaign and by night, made sure posters were put up in his wife's constituency. So, ironically, while it was wife and son who were contesting the elections, it fell to the affable Debendrababu's lot to devise machiavellian strategies of operation.

POLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD

■ Motherhood and politics make for a strange combination. And stranger declarations. For example, it had Nandini Satpathy announcing that she was not a "political animal" but a human being. To those who wonder at the subtleties of this: she was explaining herself to her detractors who were charging she'd moved from the Dhenkanal Sadar seat, which



she's been representing since 1974, to neighbouring Gondia so that son Tathagata, the Janata Dal candidate for Dhenkanal Sadar, could win easily. Stranger still was her utterance: "A son can fight the mother. Indian values, however, do not allow the mother to fight the son." The endless subtleties of a political mother.

BIHAR

DUBEY'S DRIVE

■ If it's not sons, then it's sons-in-law who throw politicians into an unreasonable frenzy. For example, as far as Bindeshwari Dubey was concerned, the most crucial electoral contest in Bihar was taking place at Shahpur, where his sonin-law, Ramesh Pandey, was the Congress(I) nominee. The former chief minister of Bihar camped there for weeks, cancelling all other appointments, and launched a strenuous campaign despite his failing health.

Dubey went to such lengths even though the Janata Dal man was widely perceived to be a relatively weak candidate. The party had fielded Narendra Tewary, who ironically had



campaigned for both Dubey and K.K. Tewary in earlier elections. But, not wanting to take any chances, Dubey let loose all his loyalists on the constituency. And the wags quipped: "Does Bindeshwari Dubey think he can give away Shahpur also as dowry?"

THE OFFICIAL FEAR

■ Elections can put fear into a lot of people. Especially stars of ruling parties whose dominions seem to be slipping away. But in Bihar it was the bureaucrats who seemed the most worried. By and large, Bihar officialdom wished to see the Congress(I) return to power. First, because the wily Congress(I) Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra had created a



situation where it suited the interests of many officials to see him return to power.

What really worried the babus was the possibility of either of the two Janata Dal heavyweights, Laloo Prasad Yadav and Raghunath Iha, becoming the next chief minister. This because both men are known toughs, used to flexing their muscles and letting loose invective. Even while in the Opposition, the duo have abused senior bureaucrats and threatened to settle scores when they came to power. Said one Mishra loyalist: "Compared to these two, Jagannath Mishra is a saint." If one of them does become chief minister, then, in combination with Mulayam Singh Yadav—also known for a style that ruffles suave bureaucrats-in Uttar Pradesh, they will set the entire cow belt rattling with babus quaking in their knees.

CRIMINAL RATIONALE

Innocent unless proved guilty. That's the dictum the Janata Dal appears to be maintaining. Unless the Supreme Court certifies so, no one can be termed a criminal, it says to justify the fielding of known antisocials. So when one of the party's candidates Dilip Singh was granted bail on the very day he filed his nomination papers, the Principal General Secretary of the Bihar Janata Dal, Nitesh Kumar, had this to say: "If Jai Prakash Narayan could reform the dreaded dacoits of the Chambal, why cannot the Janata Dal try to reform some of the persons with a criminal past? They also may have reformed."

For good measure he went on to add: "The Janata Dal's

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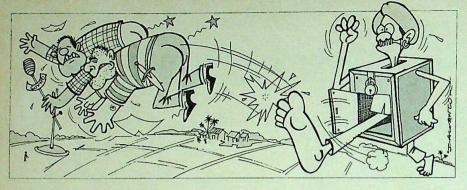
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nomination of Dilip Singh from the Mokama assembly constituency would actually serve to restore peace in the area."

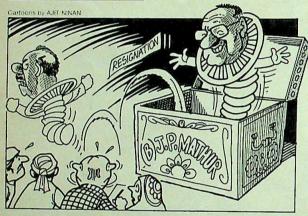
That appears unlikely if the story being spread by Dilip Singh's party colleagues is to be believed. According to them, Singh's men kidnapped the magistrate dealing with his case and took him to a hide-out. There he was intimidated into

releasing Singh. The magistrate complied and Singh got the chance to don the mantle of a politician.

Meanwhile, the Janata Dal leadership in Delhi got iittery about associating with men like Singh. Yashwant Sinha, the party spokesman. said: "The Central Parliamentary Board of the Dal was not aware of the criminal antecedents of many of the candidates. It is unfortunate

that the State Parliamentary Board did not give us the full picture." And Prime Minister V.P. Singh declared wisely: "If the Janata Dal has made mistakes in nominating dubious persons, the people will correct them by voting for the right candidate." Thus, as always, the ball was flung swiftly back into the people's court.

RAJASTHAN



DOUBLE TROUBLE

 Hindi films aren't quite so fantastic, after all. The classic comic confusion in the reel world arising from double roles was recently duplicated in the real world of politics. It started when newspapers reported that a senior BJP leader from Rajasthan, J.P. Mathur, had resigned in protest against ticket distribution for the assembly polls. Immediately, the party's all-India secretary-who, coincidentally, is also called J.P. Mathurbegan receiving a stream of calls. Journalists familiar with the voluble BJP secretary were stunned at his decision to quit.

They were even more surprised to discover that it wasn't the all-India secretary—who happens to be from Uttar Pradesh—who had resigned after all. Amazingly, the Rajasthan Mathur had not only the same initials, but even the same name-Jagdish Prasad. And the all-India secretary confounded the confusion by declaring: "You can write that J.P. Mathur has requested J.P. Mathur not to resign from the вје.' Only Manmohan Desai fans must have figured that out.

INDEPENDENCE PAYS

■ Independence in politics pays. At least it seemed to be doing so in Rajasthan. The BJP and the Janata Dal were supposed to have come to seat adjustments, but actually there were official candidates and rebel ones. There were 'official' Janata Dal candidates who the BJP claimed were 'unofficial'

and vice versa. In this confusing scenario, the electorate often put up candidates of their own.

So popular were some of these that the 'official' candidates often found their party workers working for the independents. In Nasirabad, the Janata Dal's H.C. Chaudhury found workers of both his



party and the BJP canvassing for the independent candidates. And in Kekhri, both Janata Dal and Congress(I) workers took out joint processions in support of an independent. At this rate party tickets may soon become a liability.

ROYAL BLUNDER

■ It was a royal blunder. When the former rajmata of Jaipur, Maharani Gayatri Devi, walked into a mosque in Bagru in Rajasthan's Sanganer assembly constituency to address an election meet she was faced with a piquant situation.

She had inadvertently walked into a meeting of Congress(I) nominee, Indira Mayaram, though she was campaigning for an independent, Jitendra Pal Singh. Much to her discomfiture. she realised her mistake only after she reached the dais. By which time the crowd was cheering for her. But the former rajmata displayed queenly presence of mind. Without batting an eyelid, she went on to address the confused gathering.



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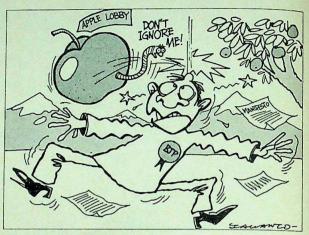
HIMACHAL PRADESH



RAM RAJYA

■ If nomenclature were an indication, the first state to establish Ram Rajya could well be Himachal Pradesh. There were at least 90 Rams fighting the polls in 50 of the state's 68 assembly seats. There were three Ram Lals, two Ram Rattans. Ram Rakhas, Ram Naths and Ram Chands, a Ram Pratap, Ram Das, Ram Nand and a Ram Krishan.

Yetit was not the aya Ramgaya Rams but a woman who was making history in Himachal. It was the first time in the state that a woman was contesting from three constituencies. Some more epic resonances. Her name: Radha Rani.



APPLES OF DISCORD

■ Forget Bofors, corruption, communalism. In the electoral battle in Himachal the issue was the apple. So powerful are the apple lobbyists in the hill state that each party went out of its way to assure them that their interests would be protected. While Congress(I) Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh warned that the BJP would not give importance to the apple, BJP chief Shanta Kumar maintained that Singh had ignored the apple. The Janata Dal's Ram Lal added a vegetable to this fruity fight. Not only had the Congress(I) done little for the apple, he maintained, but it had allowed hundreds of tonnes of potatoes to rot.

MANIPUR

Narrow Win

VEN for a state like Manipur where political skullduggery is I nothing new, the election to the 60-member assembly and the formation of a ministry was perplexing.

Twelve days after the polling, the hurriedly-formed United Legislature Front (ULF)-including the Manipur

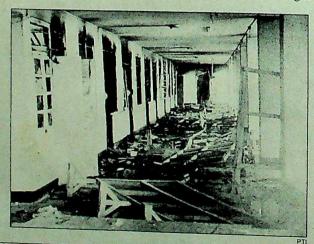
People's Party (MPP). Janata Dal, Congress(S), сы, Kuki National Assembly and the National People's Party (NPP)—
came close to collapse before it finally elected MPP President Rajkumar Randbir Singh to head the state's first non-Congress(I) government.

Adding to the chaos was the violence sparked off by mobs fearing that the Congress(I) was trying to manipulate the counting in the deputy commissioners office. The office

was set ablaze and uncounted votes of 12 constituencies and counted ballots of 11 constituencies were burnt.

When the results of 46 seats were first declared-election to two seats were countermanded-and the formation of the Assembly was announced, both the Congress(I) and the ULF which got 23 seats each staked their claim to form the Government.

Arsoned office of Imphal's deputy commissioner



Congress (I) leaders who met the Governor Chintamani Panigrahi were asked to give a list of legislators supporting them making one of the observers Rajesh Pilot accuse him of "trampling democracy".

It was the repoll to the 12 constituencies which finally helped solve the crisis as the Congress(I) could win only three and the ULF bagged nine. Both the MPP and Janata Dal got 10 seats each resulting in yet another problem: the fight for the chief ministership.

The Janata Dal aspirant, Amutombi Singh, finally settled for the deputy chief ministership.

With an opportunistic front in power, the Congress(I) hopes to win over some among the six Congress(S) legislators. Further, many defeated candidates in the constituencies where repoll was held are threatening to go to court. Political stability. thus, seems to be a distant dream in the state.

> FARZAND AHMED in Imphal

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KASHMIR

Hedging the Bets

Jagmohan adopts a tough-and-liberal strategy to stem the rot

T was the first Friday in months that curfew had been lifted in Srinagar city. Yet even on February 23, the shops remained closed. The people, however, emerged. Their hands in the air-making victory signs and waving multi-coloured flags of various militant organisations-tens of thousands of youth, women and children came out on the streets. Singing religious verses from the Ouran and raising slogans for freedom, the processions snaked through the posh Residency Road to the United Nations' observer's office to submit a memorandum seeking plebiscite in Kashmir. Some were clad in white death-shrouds, and the eerie refrain that echoed was: Al jehad gao, maro ya mar jao (Sing for the holy war, kill or be killed).

Governor Jagmohan was in Delhi that day discussing the plan outlay for the state. His adviser, Ved Marwah, was in his Srinagar office, clearing various files for the construction of schools and bridges for outlying towns. Paramilitary personnel were keeping an unagitated eye on the demonstrators, even as the militants kept their protests disciplined. In the evenings the bureaucrats prepared an "all normal" report for the press briefing: there had been no instances of police firings, deaths or tension. The administration then decided to lift the curfew altogether.

There was much more to be read into the day's events than seemed apparent. The underlying message was that after a month of Central rule, and an immediate clampdown to stem the rot, Governor Jagmohan was down to evolving his long-term strategy. The unique formula he had decided to adopt was: permit peaceful protests no matter how unpalatable the sloganeering; but at the same time give no quarter to terrorism. Also, play the game by the rule of the law. Hence, no knee-jerk raids and encounters after each act of violence, and no glorification of extremists through special treatment. As an aide to the governor said: "What is wrong in political

Militants in death shrouds lead a procession: volatile spirits

demonstrations? They happen all the time in Delhi's Boat Club. It's only their flags which display Kalashnikovs. But if the people do, that will be dealt with differently."

Jagmohan backed this tough-andliberal strategy with covert political initiatives. Feelers were sent to the People's League leader, Shabir Shah, to enter into a political dialogue. Shah, an important militant leader now in jail, in turn conveyed that no dialogue would be fruitful unless all militant leaders were taken into confidence. The administrators are now hoping that after a phase of inter-group rivalry, a cohesive leadership will emerge which will be representative in nature and mature enough to both conduct negotiations as well as understand the complexity of the issues in the state. It is also hoped—though somewhat optimistically, considering their present political thinking (see interview)—that time will reduce the element of armed rebellion from the militants' political agenda.

The Government has adopted this



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new approach after assessing the situation for over a month. The last two months have seen more than 115 people, including a dozen paramilitary personnel, killed. And though a police crackdown-including firing-forced curfew violators indoors, the Government was making no headway in busting armed groups. No important militant had been captured or eliminated. Moreover, the police firings were being used to generate rumours of massacres and genocides; and were being exploited by even those like former chief minister Faroog Abdullah to regain their shattered credibility.

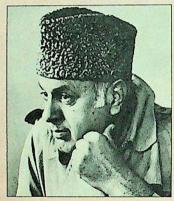
The new approach was also the result of a realisation that the state could not be administered through the gun. Things are extremely serious for the militants enjoy immense popular support, and the people treat their word as law. To celebrate the Shivratri and Shab-e-Meraj festivals, the militants called for a "temporary ceasefire"; this was observed. Even when curfew was relaxed, one call from the militants and every shop would refuse to open its shutters.

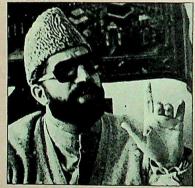
Government departments have also been feeling the brunt of this militancy. After Srinagar station director Lassa Koul was gunned down, the entire Doordarshan staff resigned, returning to work only after an assurance was given that there would be no meddling in the local newscasts. Srinagar airport has only two permanent employees now-the rest are on deputation and change every fortnight. The Jammu & Kashmir policemen are nervous about the sword of social boycott dangling over their heads. Says a senior IPS officer:



By permitting processions and sidestepping confrontation Jagmohan is aiming to restart a political dialogue.

The dissolution of the state Assembly has forced Faroog to talk in the militants' language.





Moulvi Faroog knows that he cannot stop militants from using mosques.

Shabir Shah cannot talk to the Government now because any dialogue will alienate him.



"But for a few areas, the militants dictate their terms. Either by consent or force." Now they've even declared that Friday be observed as the weekly holiday instead of Sun-

What is even more disturbing is the paralysis of the judicial system. The fear of militants has seen to it that there is no attorney general to plead government cases, that public prosecutors have quit their jobs. As have counsels and legal advisers of about 150 government departments. Slowly. work in both the high and lower courts is grinding to a halt. In fact, it was the Jammu & Kashmir Bar Association which last fortnight appealed to the UN to intervene and "secure the right of selfdetermination" of the Kashmiri people. It also demanded that a team be sent to probe human rights violations.

Aggravating matters was Farooq Abdullah. Though the rule of his party, the National Conference, was marked with oppressive measures and human rights violation, Abdullah in a statement called Jagmohan's rule genocidal. Moreover, forgetting his assertions that no power could separate Kashmir from India, he termed Kashmir a watan (country) and called for an inquiry on an international level.

The assembly dissolution exposed the true face of his partymen. Former minister, Abdul Salam Deva, met leaders from the valley who decided to disband the party and convert it into the Plebiscite Front which fought for self-determination under Sheikh Abdullah for 22 years before 1975. They also directed the party's cadre to work with the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF)

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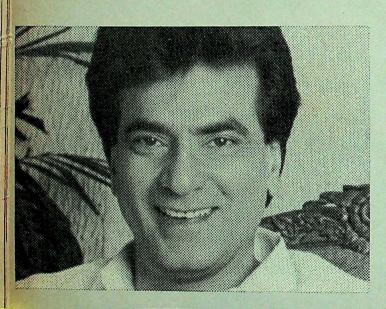
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activists who they called mujahedin (freedom fighters). Similar political insecurity forced even moderate party leaders like Saifuddin Soz, MP, to request the Centre to talk to the JKLF for a political settlement.

> UT a political dialogue with the Centre does not figure on the Jagenda of the militants. Emboldened by the public support, they wish to press for a plebiscite. The other major difficulty is that none of the 26 organisations has a clear-cut leadership which can be approached for a dialogue. And in the present atmosphere, no one will come forward to negotiate lest he be alienated from the others.

Though Jagmohan's crisis managers feel the anger of the youth will eventually wane, it may take quite some time to do so. And meantime the wellarmed cadres can continue to wreak chaos in the valley. Says a top aide of Jagmohan: "We cannot expect total normalcy in a hurry. They are angry and they have arms. We should be ready for



Women and children protest in Srinagar

major set-backs on that front."

But at least Jagmohan and his trouble-shooters seem to have discovered the existence of a political train in the troubled valley. What they need to do is find the rails to put it back on. However, the process of identifying those rails, at the moment, threatens to be a long-drawn and agonising one.

-PANKAJ PACHAURI in Srinagar

IAVED MIR

"We will not negotiate"

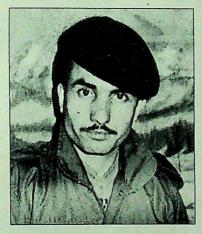
JAVED Mir, 23, is the typical JKLF leader. Young, firebrand and confident to the extent of sounding cocky. Though he claims that he is a mujahed and not a politician, he understands every nuance of the wounded Kashmiri psyche. Dressed in faded jeans and a green jacket, he moves around freely in Srinagar city with another youngster, Noor Mohammad Kalwal, who was freed in exchange of the home minister's daughter. He talked to Senior Correspondent PANKAJ PACHAURI about the JKLF's agitation and political ideology. Excerpts:

Q. Are you for a political negotiation with the Centre?

A. No. We will not accept anything less than independence. We are not bent on winning elections and getting seats. Our armed struggle is for independent Kashmir. We want to make it clear to all nations that till they see the Kashmiri people as a friendly nation, no solution is possible.

Q. What will you do if the Government invites you for a dialogue?

A. We are not getting into any negotiation business. We have seen



Mir: looking for international support

the Indian Government's handling of Kashmir for the last four decades.

Q. Don't you think the National Conference will win over your cadres by demanding a plebiscite?

A. If the people welcome them, we will welcome them. But the people know them inside out and will not accept them. They have earlier played with Kashmir for their politics.

Q. Some militant organisations talk about an Islamic state while others talk about a secular state.

A. They are all different paths to a same goal-which is ouster of the Indian Army and a plebiscite.

Q. How do you react to

Jagmohan's rule in the state?

A. They have sent Jagmohan and the paramilitary forces now. This is only a trial. Now they can go further and send the army. We have seen the mood of the people. Now we can even turn the turrets of the tanks like they did in Romania. We have enough arms to do that.

Q. But if you continue taking help from Pakistan, it will create more problems for you.

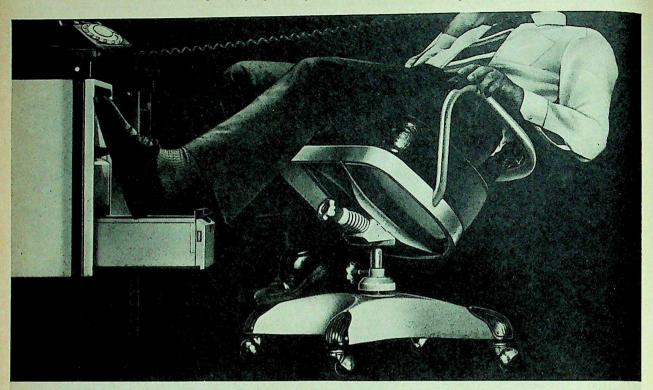
A. Pakistan is helping us only by giving us moral support. We get our arms from our brothers in Azad Kashmir and other places in the world.

Q. But why do you kill innocent people like the Doordarshan director Lassa Koul?

A. Why didn't he stand up for the people and show the truth about Kashmir. They talk about television autonomy, why didn't he fight for that. Every day they say that militants are killed and guns captured. Why don't they show that on TV? None of our men has been arrested or killed. All that shown on TV are lies. They should show that thousands of Kashmiris are on the streets demanding independence.

Q. What do you think of V.P. Singh?

A. Who comes to power in Delhi or goes out does not affect us. Here it is JKLF everywhere.

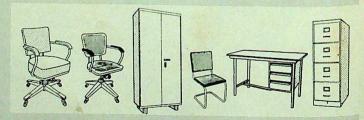


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Criminal Cover-up

Policemen go unpunished for role in Bhagalpur riots



THAT the police were to a large extent perpetrators of the Hindu-Muslim riots that rocked Bhagalpur in October-November last year is a well-established fact.

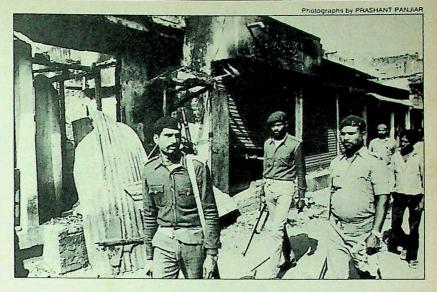
That the Congress(I) state Government has done little to punish the guilty is equally well known. Cases had been registered against only three policemen and last fortnight it appeared that even they would go scot-free.

Police sergeant Om Prakash Singh is accused of killing a Muslim employee at the district magistrate's office in Bhagalpur town. Though a case is lodged against him, he continues in his job.

There is an arrest warrant out for Ram Chandra Singh, an assistant subinspector. He is accused of covering-up the Logain massacre, in which, according to the official figure, 116 Muslims were killed. The police say Ram Chandra Singh is absconding; the people say he is moving about freely.

If the killers of Logain-most of whom were not even charged—are getting away scot-free, so are the perpetrators of the Chanderi massacre (official toll: 67). To begin with, the massacre could not have taken place without the connivance—if not direct participation—of the police, but not one policeman was charged. And last fortnight even the 100 persons accused of the massacre were released on bail. Reason: the CID failed to submit the charge-sheet within the stipulated 90 days.

To add insult to injury, 40 policemen posted in Bhagalpur district have defied transfer orders issued in November last year. As all were routine transfers of policemen who had completed three years, their action exposes their guilt. Explains a senior police officer: "They know their departure will encourage local people to expose their complicity in the riots." The Government has, of course, taken no disciplinary action against the defiant policemen. The result: the very men who had participated in the riots are now investigating them. "As long as they remain here, it will be impossible to punish the culprits," says





Police patrolling in Bhagalpur; victims outside their ruined homes: justice denied

another senior officer at Bhagalpur.

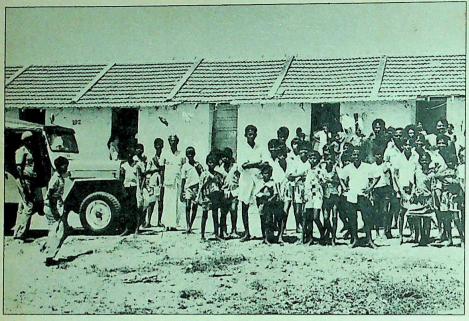
If there were any doubts about police complicity, they were put to rest by the recently submitted report of Ajit Dutt, additional pig, Bhagalpur (rural), on the Logain massacre. The report gives a graphic account of how the police arrived at the village on October 28, the day after the massacre, but suppressed news about it for nearly a month by helping the culprits bury the victims. The bodies were finally dug up on December 8. Based on Dutt's report, cases were registered against 14 persons-of whom just two were policemen. So far. no one has been arrested. And with the accused in the Chanderi massacre having gotten away, most believe even the guilty at Logain will go unpunished.

This is why when the commission of inquiry into the riots began working belatedly last fortnight and invited the public for depositions, it generated no enthusiasm. This should not surprise as reports of two earlier commissionsinquiring into the Jamshedpur riots of 1979 and the Biharsharif riots of 1982have still not been made public.

To cap it all, as many as three powerful gangsters, Madho Mandalwho is still in jail-Kameshwar Yadav and Ram Chandra Raman, who are alleged to have engineered the riots, are contesting the assembly elections as independent candidates supported by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).

If all these factors were isolated from each other, it would not make for such a frightening picture for the Muslims of Bhagalpur. But taken together, the police cover-up, government apathy and the VHP's boldness lead to one conclusion: there will be no justice for victims of the Bhagalpur riots.—UTTAM SENGUPTA

SHYAM TEKWAN



An Alarming Influx

With the IPKF pulling out, Tamils flee Lanka for India

sense of deja vu has descended on the inhabitants of Mandapam. about 20 km from Rameswaram. Once again they are witness to a mass influx of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka following the IPKF's phased withdrawal from the island. Already, there are nearly 3,000 refugees in the Mandapam transit camp and 300 at Kottapattu near Tiruchirapalli. And each dawn brings fresh boatloads of Tamils.

But compared to the early '80s, this time around there is a difference. Over 300 refugees are militants belonging to non-ltte groups-eprlf, endlf, telo and PLOTE. And with the IPKF's total withdrawal, scheduled for March 31, the numbers are expected to swell further.

For the beleaguered Tamils, the camp provides a sanctuary from the LTTE's 'brutal thirst for dominance'—a common thread in the experiences recounted by the inmates. Says Nagamma, 30, who came to Mandapam along with her husband, Ramanathan, 34, and children last month: "My husband was in the Citizens' Volunteer Force and from the day the IPKF left, we began receiving threats from the LTTE. We took refuge in a church. From there we secured passage on a boat to India."

Says another refugee Dhamarani, 25, whose husband, Sivanesan, 20, is an

EPRLF member: "After the IPKF left, my husband hid in a relative's house. Armed LTTE men would come to our house every evening asking for him. So, as soon as we could, we got on a boat and came here." For Sadasivam, 65, this is the second time that he has been forced to take refuge in Mandapam. In 1983, after the first out-break of violence on the island, he was in the camp for over two years. Says he: "After the accord was signed, I was sent back and given a plot of land for resettling in Mannar. Last year, I built a house there which was set afire by the LTTE in September. I came back and now, I don't know if I want to return."

But fleeing the island is not easy. Earlier this month, the LTTE—in a bid to preventrival Tamil group members from seeking sanctuary in India—shot at two boats carrying EPRLF members and their families off the coast of Vedaranyam in Thanjavur district. Seven were killed and 19 injured. Says a militant, Vedanayagam, 24, bitterly: "The LTTE wants to rule the land and kill everyone else."

Nevertheless, the presence of militants at the camp is a cause for concern for locals. Most are in the 18-25 age group and belong to the EPRLF. Asks a resident: "If there are so many militants here, can you imagine how many are roaming around Tamil Nadu freely?"

Sri Lankan refugees at Rameswaram

Though the militants claim to have left their weaponry behind in Sri Lanka-either buried in safe places in the north and east provinces or "handed over to the IPKF"—there are signs that this is not entirely true. The large haul of arms in Dargavalasai village, near Ramand town, is a case in point. The arms included 64 9mm pistols, 40 LMGs, 88 AK-47s, a rocket AZ launcher and 16 rocket missiles. Expectedly, the incident set off a wave of panic in the area.

Ironically enough, while outsiders entering the camp are screened

carefully, the refugees-militant or otherwise-are allowed free movement inside and outside the camp. According to reports, many of them collect their fortnightly dole of Rs 55 and leave the camp to return only after a fortnight. Asks a senior police official: "How are we to regulate their movement? They are refugees, not prisoners."

Besides the infiltration of militants and arms into the countryside, another grim possibility is that of inter-group clashes. A recent incident has concretised the fears. On February 18, two Gypsys and an Ambassador car were seen heading for the Mandapam camp. Intercepted by the police, the occupants of the vehicles opened fire—killing two and injuring 15-and sped away.

Meanwhile, the militants at the camp live in fear of reprisals. Says Thangeeswaran, 19, TELO member: "They will attack us anywhere." And going by the security arrangements at Mandapam following the shoot-out, the police believes that too. Helmeted policemen lurk behind sandbag barricades atop four outposts around the camp, training their light machine-guns on the road. And four companies of the Tamil Nadu Special Police have been deployed in Dargavalasai, Mandapam and Rameswaram areas to check militant movement.

For Tamil Nadu, the signs are ominous. The state could soon become another battlefield if the LTTE seeks to liquidate its rivals on Indian soil. And with the Indian Government's apparently benevolent attitude towards the LTTE, the possibilities are distinct and dangerous. -KAVITHA SHETTY

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The new decade heralds the beginning of a new relationship between the corporation and its customer. A relationship where more will be demanded of the corporation - and more given.

It is a relationship that calls for every enterprise to give of its fullest — to abandon half-measures and work steadily and sincerely for the common good.

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Unravelling the Plot

J.B. Patnaik-hotel chain deal comes under scrutiny



THE setting is idyllic. The 70-acre sylvan stretch of wildlife sanctuary-barely a fiveminute drive from the famous Sun Temple of Konark-has the sea

lapping its shores on one side. A natural creek trickles in and vanishes behind the shrift was also made of the steady stream of objections from within the state Government and the Union Environment Ministry. Government files testify that it was done because the "chief minister had desired the same".

The first in a series of astounding moves was to cancel the plot's status as a reserve forest through Revenue Department notification no: 23576/R dated April 23, 1987—despite the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 which stipulates that any land declared a reserve forest cannot be denotified.

Even after its status as a reserve forest was withdrawn, another obstacle remained. The vast stretch was found to fall within the Balakhunda-Konark wildlife sanctuary, notified in 1984. That the Wildlife (Protection) Act. 1972, barred the exclusion of any land from protected sanctuaries seems to have meant little to the Patnaik government. By a firman of the Forest Department, no: 15316/ HHAH dated September 1,

1987, the plot was further divested of



huddle of whispering casuarinas. Spotted deer saunter at a leisurely pace alongside a herd of black buck.

This serene location, ironically, is today in the eye of a gathering storm. Reason: the East India Hotels' proposal to convert the protected area into a five-star beach resort-the decks for which were cleared at the highest quarter, former chief minister J.B. Patnaik.

With the idea of luring leisureseeking, affluent tourists, the company—which runs the Oberoi group of hotels-had set its sights on the plot near Cahukhunte village on the Konark west block. The plot formed a

part of the reserve forest, notified under Section 4(1) of the Orissa Forest Act, 1972 (Revenue Department notification no: 5138/R dated January 18, 1978).

According to the available evidence, Patnaik bent over backwards to barter away the prime plot. Not only were forest and conservation rules circumvented, but short The East India Hotels Ltd Tei: 56116

Chairman, Rai Bahader M. S. Oberoi 4 Mangoe Lane, Calcutta-700091 Tele: 23-6751755 Telea: 7018 Gramu: "OBENTPRISE Mr P M Mohapatra, LAS • Commissioner-cum-Secretary Govt. of Orissa, Revenue De Ehubaneswar.

I would like to express my gratitude on behalf of the Company for the tremendous assistance rendered by you to allot the land at Konark to us.

Your personal intervention has definitely hastened the entire process and I am sure this will go a long way in the development of the Notel of

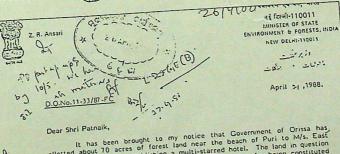
Patnaik; the reserve forest; a 'thank you' letter from hotel chain to state Government; and (bottom) Ansari's letter of protest to Patnaik

its sanctuary status.

In doing so, the Patnaik government overruled the objections of the state's principal conservator of forests, the chief wildlife warden and the district forest officer. What's worse, it also rejected objections by the then Union minister of state for environment and forests, Z.R.

> Ansari, and the then secretary to the Union Environment Ministry, T.N. Seshan.

On April 21, 1988. Seshan wrote to Patnaik: "Since the land was notified with the intention of declaring it a reserve forest and was under the control of the Forest Department, it could not have been diverted for a non-forest purpose. The diversion for construction



Dear Shri Patnaik,

It has been brought to my notice that Government of Orissa has allotted about 70 acres of forest land near the beach of Puri to M/s. East lailotted about 70 acres of forest land near the beach of Puri to M/s. East lailotted about 70 acres of forest land near the beach of Puri to M/s. East lailotted about 70 acres of forest laid in the laid in question laid in the section 4 of the Orissa Forest Act for being constituted was notified under section 4 of the Act was withdrawn and land handed notification issued under section 4 of the Act was withdrawn and land handed not forest over to the above company. Since the land was under the control of the Forest Department and notified for being declared as reserved forests, it for the laid was under the prior approval in a process of the laid was under the prior approval in a process of the laid was under the prior approval that the laid was under the prior approval to the laid was under the control of the laid was under the laid was under

purpose is not in keeping with the government policy as indicated in para 11 of the consolidated guidelines issued by letter no: 2-3/86-F, dated July 31, 1986. to all states and Union territories. I shall, therefore, be grateful if you kindly cancel the allotment of this land to East India Hotels.'

The Principal Conservator of Forest, S.C Padhi, was equally vehement. In a note to the secretary, Forest Department, he said: "The problem of environmental imbalance like floods and droughts in our state is already very deeply felt, and any dereservation would further accentuate the problem. The notification issued by the Revenue Department is not only illegal and bad in law, but also dangerous in as much as it would set a very bad precedent.'

But the disapproval failed to deter Patnaik. At his own initiative, he proceeded to convene a high-level meeting on June 5, 1987, to give his stamp of approval to the beach resort. The minutes of the meeting, recorded by an official, establish the unusual personal interest taken by Patnaik to force the decision. Wrote the official: "The chief minister desired that the proposed area for the hotel should be excluded from the sanctuary. This action should be completed within a fortnight, as desired by the chief minister.'

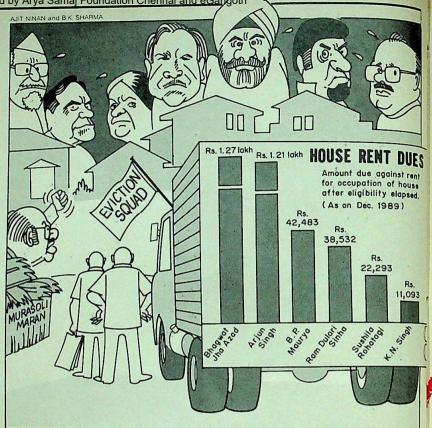
That Patnaik's administration went out of its way to facilitate the deal is also evident from a letter written on July 25, 1986 by an official of the hotel chain to P.M. Mohapatra, commissioner-cum-secretary in the state Revenue Department, expressing profuse gratitude "for the tremendous assistance rendered by you to allot the land at Konark to us".

Even as access to relevant government files leads to startling disclosures and revived public interest, an embarrassed Patnaik refuses to comment on the subject, maintaining that the press is ill-informed. Equally tight-lipped are local Oberoi executives.

In contrast, Maneka Gandhi, Union environment minister, is forthright. Says she: "A telex message has been sent to Chief Minister Hemananda Biswal, directing that the illegal allotment be cancelled." The state Government has also been instructed to fix responsibility on those involved in the land deal.

And though for the time being, the Oberois continue to sit pretty on the prime plot, clinching evidence has squarely put the former chief minister in the dock, and may soon lead to his arraignment.

-RUBEN BANNERJEE



MPs ACCOMMODATION

House Hunt

No bungalows for new ministers

EER prance around the lush sprawling lawns of the house of the high-profile general secretary of the Congress(I). But for Ghulam Nabi Azad, now recuperating from a slipped disc, life at 1, Rajaji Marg may soon become a distant memory. The reason: he is among the 290 former MPs, a few of them belonging to the Janata Dal, who have been served eviction notices.

We just had to take this drastic step. Erstwhile ministers, at least 70 of them, have invited it by not vacating it gracefully on their own," said an urban development ministry official.

According to the law, MPs are required to vacate their official residences a month after they are defeated or relinquish office. After a month, eviction notice is served under the Public Premises Act and a fortnight later they are forcibly evacuated. But political heavyweights are known to stay in bungalows for much longer confident that their reputation will be a bulwark against forcible eviction.

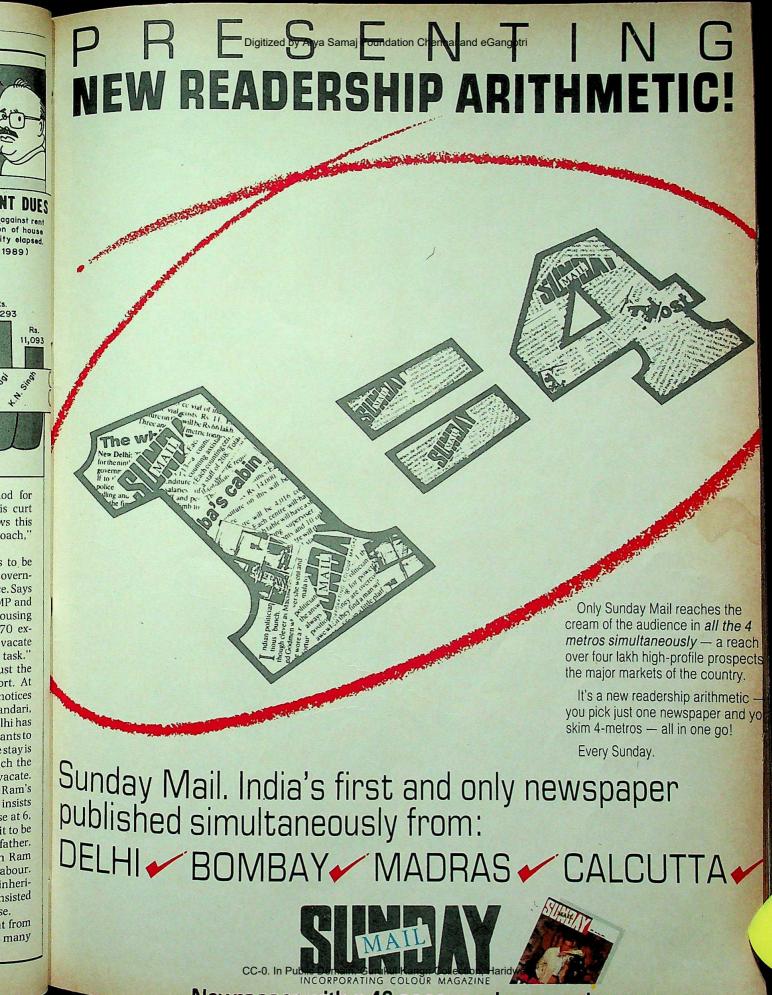
"The tradition has been to give

around six months grace period for former members to vacate. This curt serving of eviction notices shows this government's vindictive approach," says Azad.

But with 371 new members to be provided accommodation the Government did not have much of a choice. Says Mavenendra Singh, Janata Dal MP and chairman of the Lok Sabha's housing committee: "There are almost 70 exministers and making all of them vacate official bungalows is a herculean task.

Serving eviction notices is just the beginning of the herculean effort. At least two of those who got the notices have gone to court. Romesh Bhandari, former lieutenant-governor of Delhi has managed to get a stay order. He wants to retain the house till mid-May. The stay is valid only till March 8 after which the Government hopes to get him to vacate. Meera Kumar, the late Jagjivan Ram's daughter and till recently an MP, insists on not merely retaining the house at 6. Krishna Menon Marg but wants it to be converted into a memorial for her father. However, she didn't reckon with Ram Vilas Paswan, Union minister for labour. Paswan, who sees himself as the inheritor of Ram's political legacy, has insisted that he be alloted the same house.

The Government charges rent from the MPs who overstay and many



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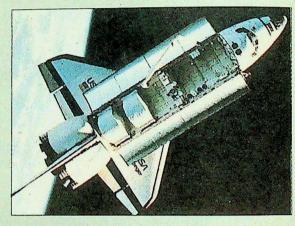
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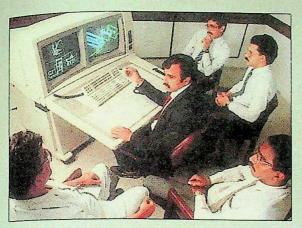
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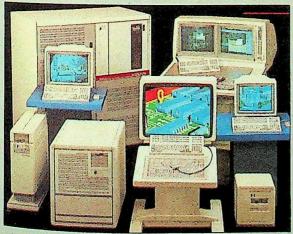
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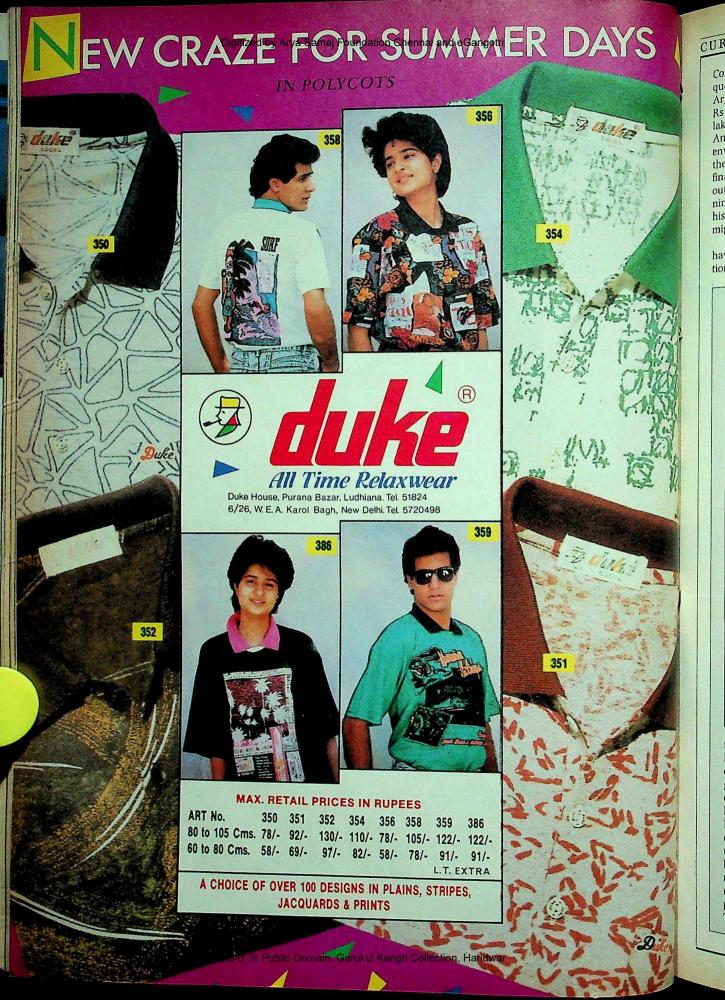
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Congress(I) leaders now owe the exchequer massive amounts. For instance, Arjun Singh owes the Government Rs 1.21 lakh, Bhagwat Jha Azad Rs 1.27 lakh and A.P. Sharma Rs 95,000, Z.R. Ansari, the former minister of state for environment and forests, who has to pay the Government nearly a lakh of rupees, finally apologised and agreed to move out of his 9, Akbar Road residence after a nine-man eviction squad landed up in his house on February 9. These amounts might be deducted from their pensions.

Almost 90 per cent of former MPs have asked for time till the school vacations, still four months away, while former ministers like H.K.L. Bhagat, Jagdish Tytler, Rajesh Pilot and Buta Singh claim that security measures do not permit them to move out. Says Tytler: "The new Government's intelligence report says that I run a high risk of being attacked by terrorists. I just want a secure place to live in."

A Janata Dal spokesman, however, dismisses all these excuses as lame. "We are only following the law. They are all men of means and can surely arrange an alternative place to stay. It is actually the pangs of giving up power and the frills that come with it that is causing the pain and bitterness.'

Many of the new ministers are waiting in the wings to move in and start enjoying the frills. K.P. Unnikrishnan is waiting for Natwar Singh to move out to his own Vasant Vihar house, Nathu Ram Mirdha for Tytler, Ajit Singh for Romesh Bhandari. Even Murasoli Maran, the minister in charge of housing, stays in a flat meant for joint secretaries. P. Upendra and I.K. Gujral also do not have suitable official accommodation.

So, it seems quite certain that till the perplexing issue is resolved, there will be only one meeting ground—the House of Parliament.

-SHARMILA CHANDRA

CONGRESS(I)

Vocal War

UDDENLY a flurry of activity is sweeping the Congress(I). After a long hibernation, the party general secretaries are back at their game of hogging headlines.

Ghulam Nabi Azad, who is undergoing acupuncture treatment, has begun holding press conferences at his

Not to be outdone, K.N. Singh brought at his evening briefing a group of burga-clad women and children who he claimed were victims of terrorist attacks and administrative indifference in Srinagar. Blaming Mufti Mohammed Sayeed for their plight, he croaked: "I am charging the Mufti with disrupting the country's unity." He went on to assert that the Union home minister played the same game even when in the Congress(I).

Then the irrepressible Singh went

yet to receive presidential assent.

His swagger took no more than a day to come to grief. For, the next day a Government spokesman affirmed that the bill had received the President's assent on January 6, one day after it was sent to him. As if that was not enough, the spokesman also clarified that the President had made no comments during his 20-minute meeting with the Congress(I) delegation. In fact, the President was quite annoved with the way Singh tried to put words

residence. Prostrate in bed, he alleged last fortnight that V.P. Singh was distorting facts about the previous government's defence spending. To ensure that the scribes kept coming for his briefings, he dished out delicious Kashmiri kababs. A few days later, he called pressmen again only to distribute photocopies of Press Information Bureau hand-outs about various ministries' consultative committee meetings. "All ministries have praised performance of our government. Then why did it have to go?" he asked.

on to outdo himself. Two days later, he led a delegation of party leaders to President R. Venkataraman and presented him a 'white paper' on Punjab. Later, he told the press that the President looked 'grim and concerned' and charged the Government with keeping him in the dark about developments in Punjab. Then with mounting bravura, he put his foot in his mouth. He authoritatively declared that the much-publicised 59th Constitutional Amendment repealing emergency provisions in strife-torn Punjab was



Ghulam Nabi Azad (left); and K.N. Singh: full of bluster

in his mouth.

Azad and Singh are shooting their mouths to remain in the news. Envying the way party spokesman M.J. Akbar has been grabbing publicity, the two also want a place under the arclights. And as criticism within the party and press forces Akbar to beat a temporary retreat, the duo are flexing their vocal chords in a virtual frenzy, desperate to impress Rajiv Gandhi. Clearly, the possibility of a party reshuffle is putting this wild charge into -BHASKAR ROY

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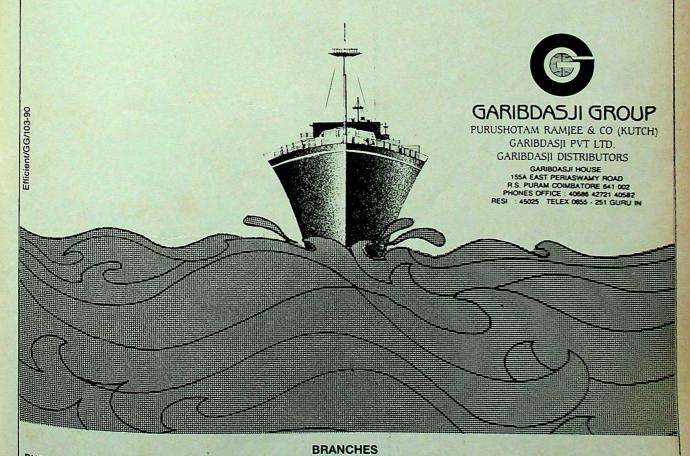
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Split Within

Discord over the accord



THE ironies continue to pile up in Assam. Four and a half years ago, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) rode to power on the strength of the accord it signed with the

Centre. Today, the same accord hangs like a millstone around the Government's neck threatening to drag it down.

Ironically again, the principal threat to the state Government's existence today comes not from rival parties or Bodo

militants but from the All Assam Students Union (AASU), the very organisation that fathered the AGP.

And in yet another irony, the principal targets of the AASU are Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Home and Accord Implementation Minister Bhrigu Phukan, who had led the six-yearlong Assam agitation launched by the AASU.

Last month, the AASU delivered a peremptory ultimatum to the AGP Gov-

ernment: prove its sincerity in implementing the 1985 Assam accord or face the wrath of the people. The Centre too was condemned for delaying the implementation of the accord.

On January 27, the pressure paid off. After discussions with AASU representatives, Union Home Secretary Shiromani Sharma and A.P. Sarwan, chief secretary to the Assam Government, signed an agreement to implement the accord in a timebound manner. Said AASU chief Atul Bora: "We have been hopeful for too long. The time-bound plan will test their sincerity.'

The AASU's grouse is that the clauses of the Assam accord providing for detecting and disenfranchising foreigners and then deporting them have not been implemented. Phukan lays the blame for non-implementation of the accord on the Congress(I). Says he: "We are explaining to the people that this is not our fault. The Congress(I)

government at the Centre did not allow us to do anything. We have now started discussions with the National Front Government and things are changing.'

The difficulty in implementing the accord lies principally in the legal hurdles that have to be surmounted before a foreigner can be deported. Unlike in other states, the burden of proving that a person is a foreigner lies on the complainant. And while in other states, foreigners can be summarily tried under the Foreigners Act, in Assam they have to be tried under the Illegal Migrant Determination Tribunal (IMDT) Act which involves a civil procedure that could last all of several years.

Phukan with Mahanta; (below) the Assam agitation: failed promises





Now, the Assam Government, under pressure from the AASU, has demanded that the Centre repeal the Act. According to the January 27 agreement, the Centre must take a decision on repealing the Act by the end of February. Also, the pending investigations on the detection and expulsion of post-1971 entrants are to be completed by October 31, 1990.

At the state level, the implementation of the new agreement will be monitored by Phukan, who was allotted the accord implementation portfolio after the recent reshuffle. Phukan himself was unwilling to accept the post. His sunporters say that Mahanta, in transferring the portfolio, is only seeking to shift the blame onto Phukan. The portfolio was, in fact, held by Mahanta himself until October 1988 when it was trans-

ferred to Joynath Sharma. How, Phukan's supporters now ask, can he implement the accord by October when the Government had done nothing for four and a half years?

Joynath Sharma denies, however, that nothing has been done so far. More than 10,320 persons, he claims, have been expelled for illegal re-entry into Assam and more than 16,000 cases referred to the tribunals until November last year.

And besides, he says, there's been considerable progress in constructing the border roads which will facilitate patrollingof a total length of 162 km, 90 km have been completed.

Such claims don't seem to have cut much ice with the AASU. Their hopes are now placed on the January 27 agreement. Says AASU Secretary Amitabh Thakuria: "We have told them that if nothing is done within the new time frame, the AASU will have to launch another agitation.'

If that happens, the AASU, with a membership of 25 lakh. could very easily cripple the state. It has already begun tightening the screws. At the Lakhimpur general conference. it decided not to support any political party in the coming election. The rope that links it to the AGP has been frayed to the last strands. And if it snaps, the AGP could find itself hurtling into political oblivion—or worse.

-FARZAND AHMED in Guwahati



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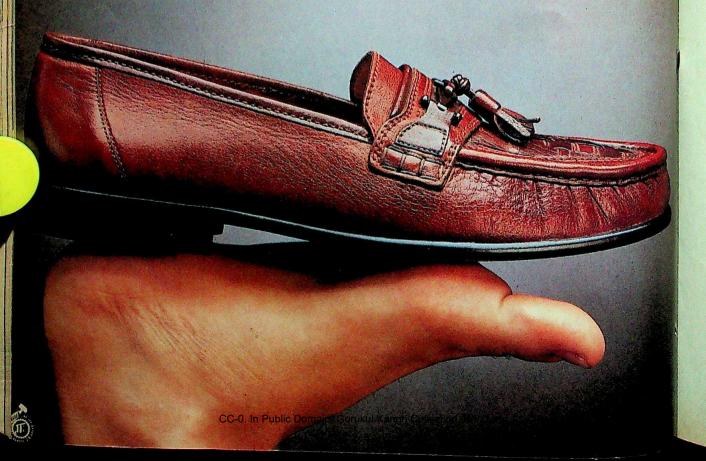
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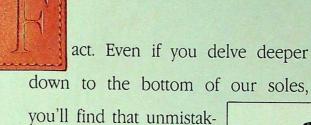
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WEST BENGAL

In Transition

Change of guard in the CPI(M)



MEN may come and men may go, but the party goes on for ever. At least, that's what communists like to believe. While in Eastern Europe such moving

faith may have been recently shaken, in West Bengal last month, the CPI(M) was at great pains to emphasise the permanence of and continuity in the party.

Less than a week after the death of

strong party organisation with an established network of leadership from the state to the panchayat level. Also, as secretary of the state unit, Dasgupta is unlikely to play an overarching role. He will share responsibility with other senior leaders like Benoy Choudhary, land reforms minister, and, of course, Chief Minister Jyoti Basu.

Dasgupta will also be shouldering an additional responsibility. Having taken Mukherjee's place as chairman of the Left Front, he will have to coordinate the activities of the various parties that form the Government, balancing the interests of all and trying to avoid the charge that the CPI(M) is acting the big brother.

He has already been handling this task for some time. Under Mukherjee, he

VISHWA HINDU PARISHAD

Cash Quibbles

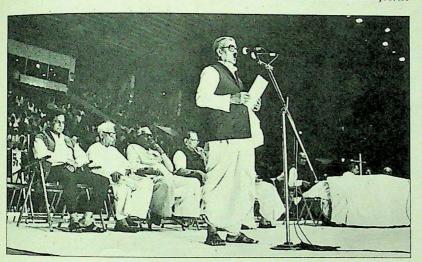
Leaders bicker about money

THE hype and hysteria generated over the Ramjanmabhoomi issue seems to have boomeranged on the organisation that is spearheading the raging controversy-the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). In the process, the VHP is faced with a vertical divide that could dampen the organisation's religious fervour. Worse, the organisation is also under attack from other fundamentalist groups, each of which wants to project itself as the sole guardian of Hindu interests.

The warning bell sounded when a section of the leadership prevailed upon the organisation to postpone construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya scheduled for February 14. But the issue that aggravated the leadership divide is one that a religious body should not normally be preoccupied with: money.

The VHP had collected a staggering Rs 8.29 crore from devotees participating in the Ramshila pujas. And when at the Allahabad Sant Sammellan held in late January, it claimed to have spent Rs 1.63 crore of this sum on the pujas and the foundation-stone laying ceremony at Ayodhya, many eyebrows were raised as

VHP leaders: serious divisions



Dasgupta addressing condolence meet for Mukherjee: tough legacy

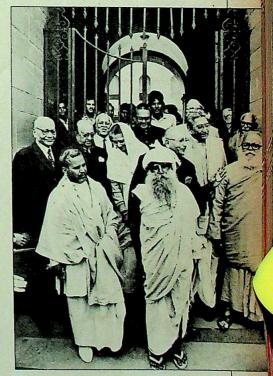
Saroj Mukherjee, secretary of the state unit, on February 10, his place was taken by Sailen Dasgupta, a relatively low-key leader. To all appearances, nothing had changed. Said a state committee member: "Many leaders have died but the communist movement has grown. We don't think Mukherjee's death will affect the growth."

But the transition may not be quite so smooth. During his seven years as head of the state unit. Mukherjee had played a key part, acting as a link between the older leaders and the burgeoning membership at the grassroots, and appointing many younger members to policy-making positions. The 65-yearold Dasgupta may not be equipped to fully take over the role. While he is at home dealing with leaders in the top echelons of the party, he is not in close touch with the cadres.

That may not matter immediately because Mukherjee leaves behind a had helped in developing personal contacts between various leaders and in his new incarnation, he will be carrying on a role he had already been playing.

So in the final analysis, it is his own party which will claim most of Dasgupta's attention. The CPI(M)'s membership in the state has been growing rapidly and doubts have been expressed about the ideological purity of new members. What this means is that younger members may no longer unquestioningly accept the leadership's edicts, especially in the wake of developments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, under Mukherjee, the CPI(M) had made efforts to change its image as an authoritarian party. Unlike his predecessor, Pramod Dasgupta, Mukherjee had made efforts to develop a collective leadership at various levels. Difficult though it is, Sailen Dasgupta's task will be to build on that legacy. placing more emphasis on "democracy" and less on "centralism" in that old party shibboleth "democratic centralism". -FARZAND AHMED



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the sum seemed astronomical. Asked a mahant: "Can you believe that so much can be spent on transporting bricks. On what did they spend so much?"

That there was friction within the organisation became evident last fortnight at the Ayodhya Sant Sammelan. The meet, at which VHP leaders were to offer an explanation for postponing the construction, turned out to be a gathering of local sadhus, and barring Mahant Avaidyanath and Mahant Ram Chandra Das Paramhans: most religious figure-heads absented themselves.

To nip the growing suspicion of financial fraud in the bud, the VHP's access to the money has now been curtailed. The account now has to be operated by three signatories: Mahant Paramhans, of the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas, Mahant Nrit Gopal Das from the Mukti Samiti and Vishnu

Hari Dalmia of the VHP. Says Mahant Paramhans. "We believe the money wasn't misused but to avoid confusion we've evolved the system of three signatories to operate the account."

Even if one were to believe that there is no discord over money, there is some disgruntlement both within the VHP and other Hindu fundamentalist groups over postponement of the temple construction for four months. Last fortnight, the VHP was considerably embarrassed when the shankaracharya of Dwarka announced that he would perform shilanyas at the mandir-masjid site on April 27, Dalmia lashed out at him, saying: "Where was he when we were performing the shilanyas? This is all to get publicity."

But even persons supporting the postponement are offering different ex-

planations for it. While Mahant Paramhans says the postponement was made in view of the tension at the country's borders, Mahant Avaidyanath says it was because of the prime minister's plea. For good measure he adds: "Not more than 20 per cent of us were opposed to the postponement for four months."

Not that the VHP plans to sit idle waiting for the prime minister to find a magical solution to the problem. Over the next four months it plans to launch a jan jagran (mass mobilisation) and a fund collection drive. Says Mahant Paramhans: "We have not yet asked people to contribute for the construction of the temple. Once that is done we will be overflowing with funds."

So even as the VHP rift widens, the leaders can console themselves with the fact that they are also getting richer.

grounded the entire air-

bus fleet. Now you want

to stop the trains for the

sake of a few baboons.

stop

-DILIP AWASTHI

monkeying

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

Serious Business

DESPITE the heated debate over the performance of the National Front Government, not much is known about the most crucial as-

pect of its functioning: cabinet meetings. One reason is there haven't been that many to write home about. The other, of course, is that the Cabinet is so minuscule compared to Rajiv Gandhi's jumbo carriers that the cabinet room seems absurdly empty. Nonetheless, its 'lean and mean' character ensures that cabinet meetings are lively affairs. Here's how the latest one went:

V.P. Singh: Good morning, gentlemen...(hastily hiding his fur cap)...and, er...lady. We have some serious business to discuss. What is happening in the country is a national affront. We must identify the most serious problems and then fix our priorities. Now, what is the single most serious problem?

Fernandes: Pepsi?

Ajit Singh: No, thank you. I only drink Thums Up. Fernandes: I wasn't offering you a drink. These (expletive deleted) robber barons should be thrown out. I think we are being too soft on these bas...

V.P. Singh: Pepsi hardly qualifies as a serious national problem.

Maneka: I think we should ban the railways from running trains past the Delhi zoo. The poor little darlings are suffering so much. Mr Fernandes, I demand that this urgent national problem be sorted out.

Fernandes: Why ask me? Ask the railway minister.

V.P. Singh: You are the railway minister.

Arif: We have just

Deloraces

around and get down to serious business.

Devi Lal: I have something of urgent national importance to discuss. As you know, I have just returned from Sydney where I saw this beautiful building. I want one just like that built in Haryana. I don't require much land either—30,000 acres should do.

Let's

Unnikrishnan: The Sydney Opera House? You want to build an opera house in Haryana?

Devi Lal: If my son can build Disneyland there why not this opera shopera...

V.P. Singh (sinking in his chair): Please. Are these urgent national problems?

Unnikrishnan: I have an urgent national problem. We should sack Sam. There is no communication between us. As Shakespeare said, Out damn C-dot.

Upendra: I think this autonomy issue has to be tackled on a war footing. These Doordarshan chaps will do anything to get their faces on Tv. They even had a

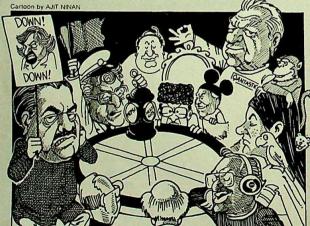
programme on autonomy just so that everybody in Mandi House could appear on it. It is ridiculous. Pagle ki duniya.

Paswan: I think I am in a minority but the burning issue is that the backwards have got more backward and the forwards are not even scoring any goals....

V.P. Singh: (angrily) Enough. I resign.

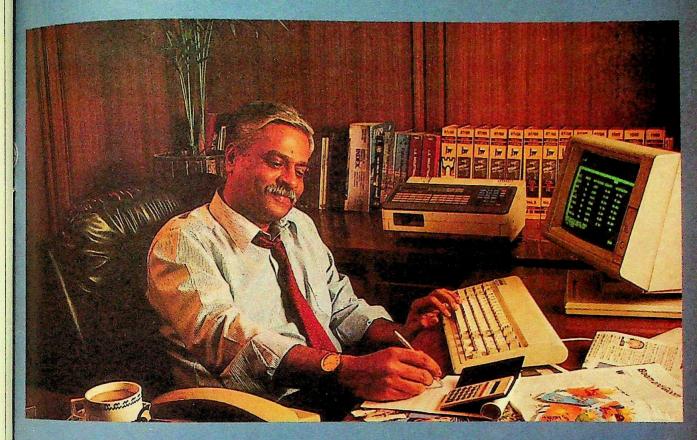
Devi Lal: (jumping up)
Really?

V.P. Singh: Actually, on second thoughts....



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Because sometimes you get your brightest ideas, just before dawn!





BUSINESS CENTRE WORKS

24 HOURS, ISN'T IT NICE TO

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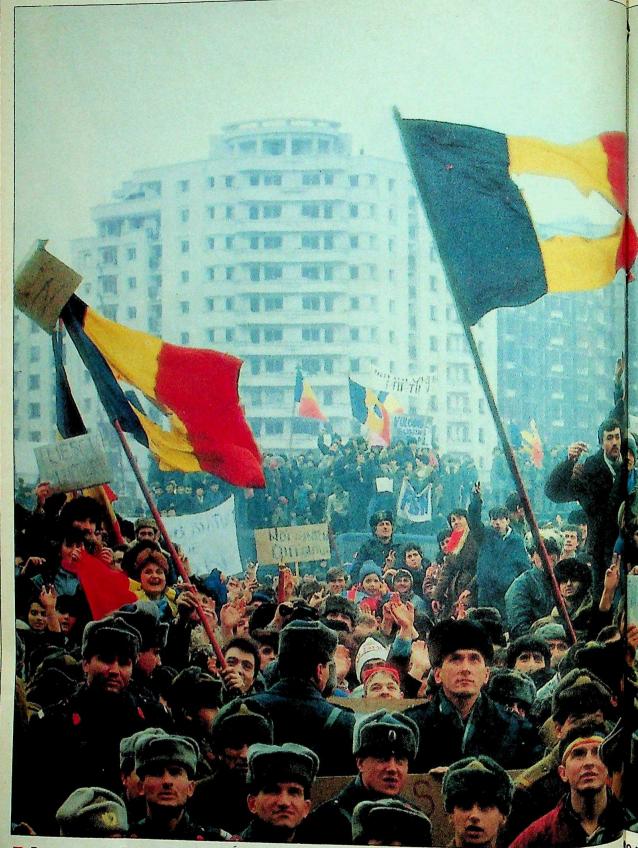
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blemovilo reject an ideology that failed the test of time



EAST EUROPE

Ucean of Change

HE journey westwards from the Shermetyevo international airport to Branden-L burg Gate is like swimming through a tempestuous ocean of change. Waves radiate from the Kremlin, convulsing the communist empire in the heart of Europe, consuming regimes, ideologies and a wall that once bisected the world.

The images that linger are grim: endless queues for everything—from meat to jewellery, from cutglass to contraceptives, and from vodka to aspirin. Images of greed, want, despair. Not hunger, not malnutrition, not the grinding poverty to which an Indian is so sadly inured. But a desperate thirst for even mundane elements that developed societies take for granted: good cigarettes, good tea and coffee, liquor, good cuts of meat, reliable medicines, a convertible currency. A society like India has lived with poverty for centuries. The East Bloc is only now discovering how poor it is in relation to the West. There is despair. But there is also a cathartic celebration of democracy.

No defeat is easy to accept. Least of all an ideological one. No surprise then that in the Soviet Union—the only country in the region where communism had patriotic and emotional moorings—one can still find old faithfuls: "Is this why we sacrificed 30 million people in the revolution and the war against fascisti? To accept capitalist fairy-tales?" But one look at the shortages, falling national health, inefficiency and currencies that look like crumpled confetti as it relates to real economics, and doubts vanish.

What remains is sometimes remorse, sometimes optimism. Many revel in the new revolution as the ocean continues to churn with the democratic tide: "Communism was a nightmare. Thank God, it is finally over." Many more say it was an ideology for a certain period of history which finally got outdated. But few, very few, any longer claim it was the future of the world.

SOVIET UNION



WAITING for a taxi on a "moderately" cold Moscow afternoon—when the mercury dips to —

19 degree Celsius—can be a testing experience. Distressing, actually, unless a bus driver comes to your help.

"Where do you want to go?" This one asks in sign language as I stick out my freezing arm at each passing taxi and quickly bury it in my pocket.

"Tass office. But I need a taxi," I say.
"Hop in," he gestures. And then ex-

tends his palm: "Five roubles."
"But the bus fare is five kopecks!"

"You want to come in or not?"

Pressed for time I hop in. For the next hour he stops a dozen times to seek directions. Finally we are at the Tass office.

"I'll wait," he indicated.

"No. paseba (thanks)," I say, worrying about the curses of the commuters he is supposed to pick up at the office closing

hour. He drives away into the snowstorm. He couldn't care less. Who cares as long as it is the state's property.

The same evening in the restaurant the waiter refuses to bring the cheque.

"I must have my cheque," I insist.

He tugs at my sleeve and asks me to follow him out of the restaurant.

"Your bill was \$55," he shows me a plain slip of paper with the figure written on it. "Just give me \$30 and go."

"But what about my cheque?" I ask

Crowds at the Moscow News office wait for the papers, displaying a new-found hunger for news



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The consequence is a free-for-all as a society starved for consumer goodies begs, borrows or collects bribes to buy what they have been denied all these years. In fact, \$50 million-worth of lingerie has also been imported by the state leading some to joke that Marx and Engels have now been replaced by Marks and

tell the manager you were leaving with-

nothing unusual: "They have dismantled the old system but haven't replaced it with

anew one. The result is a free for all where

ing cooperative in the trading business

was caught shipping out a whole squadron-16 to be precise-of T-72 main battle tanks at a Baltic port to a dubious French buyer. The tanks had been built in a factory 3,000 km away. "They bribed

the factory managers, the army, the rail-

way, the customs, the police and the intelligence. What does it show?"

hammered out of what was once consid-

ered a wrought-iron ideology. It also

shows the dilemma of a physician who has correctly diagnosed the disease de-

stroying his own body but doesn't know

It shows the rapid atrophy of a system

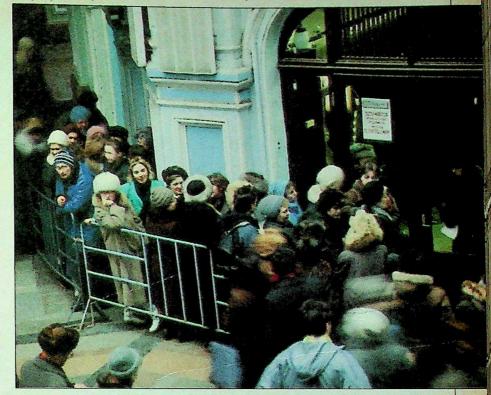
He quotes a revelation made in the Supreme Soviet: a particularly enterpris-

everyone bleeds the state white.

Next day a diplomat explains that it's

out paying." I pay \$30.

There is, no doubt, a refreshing aspect to the change as well. In the labyrinthine entrance to the Ploscid Nagina metro station, Georgy Shakhnazarov collects a sizeable audience, including policemen, to listen to him explain why Lithuania must secede. Then he sticks up posters



Jewellery queues show the paradox of poverty amid plenty

explaining his viewpoint and distributes pins displaying the flag of free Lithuania. A Khalistani doing that in Delhi could spend the next few years in jail, probably without even the benefit of a trial. In Ludhiana he could be shot. It is also because of this new-found freedom that people talk so freely to foreign scribes, as this professor of political science who offered to meet me for dinner.

7 HAT better place to invite a contact than Delhi Restauranta slice of India in the very heart of Moscow-at Krasnaya Presnya or the Red Street? Run by the ITDC it is perhaps the first ever joint venture in the Soviet Union. Also a model for the future.

It also represents the problems of the future. It has profits worth lakhs of roubles, but doesn't know what to do with

PAINTER OF DISSENT

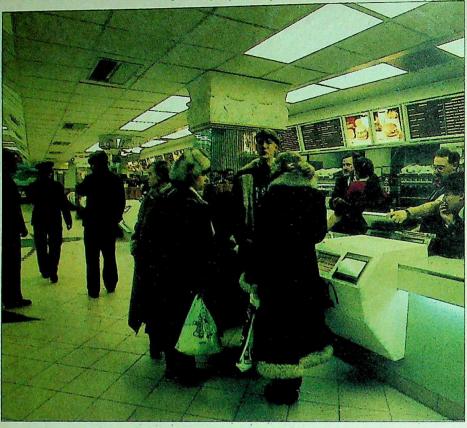
For years Vladimir Kaschirin, 38, painted images of the Soviet system in secrecy. Today his works sell on Moscow's Arbat Street.

Even if Gorbachev is a failure he is a marvellous failure. I want him to go on and on. I don't have to hide my paintings in a cellar and I can say I believe in Jesus Christ. There is no going back to the old ways now."





Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennal and eGangotri



McDonald's is a slice of capitalism right in the heart of Moscow city

them as there is no system of repatriation. In desperation the management split the restaurant into two: a rouble section for Soviet citizens and a dollar section for foreigners, which includes Indians-an unkind cut as it took the restaurant out of the reach of expatriate Indians, many of

whom work for Soviet establishments and get rouble salaries.

There were protests from the Hindustani Samaj: "An Indian restaurant, run by the Indian public sector can never do this." The restaurant relented. The waiters are all help and sympathy. Greedily eyeing the green salad on the next table I order one too. The waiter whispers: "The salad is nine dollars. We have to fly in the greens from India."

The buying power of the dollar is enormous, partly due to the three-tier system of exchange rates. Paying the hotel bill, for example, I watched in helplessness as the dollar was converted at the rate of 60 kopecks apiece (Rs 29 to a rouble). At the bank counter a foreigner could get 11 times as much for his dollar. In the street 30 times as much.

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The strength of the dollar is matched only by Marlboro cigarettes. Both currencies are favoured by private entrepreneurs in general, from taxi-drivers to prostitutes who, for some reason, operate in pairs. A knock at the door of the hotel room in the middle of the night and: "You can have both of us at 25 dollars."

A gift of Marlboro can open many doors and Russians even laugh about it. "How did Mathias Rust, the amateur German pilot, man-

age to fly his little plane right into the Red Square?'

'He painted Marlboro on the belly of his aircraft and dropped a few cartons of the cigarette each time the Soviet fighters pursued him. The pilots dived for the Marlboro cigarettes instead."

IMAM-KHATIB OF MOSCOW

The suave Tatar from Kazan Ravil Gainutdin. 34, is the religious head of the Muslims in Moscow and runs the city's first Islamic seminary at the Jama Masjid though the law still doesn't allow it. He has been holding mass prayers for the dead in Azerbaijan too.

With *perestroika* we can revive a faith sleeping for years. Even the young go to the mosques and Islam will keep pace with the Russian Orthodox Church."



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IF it is Marlboro in the Soviet Union it is Kent in Romania. And the currency situation is even

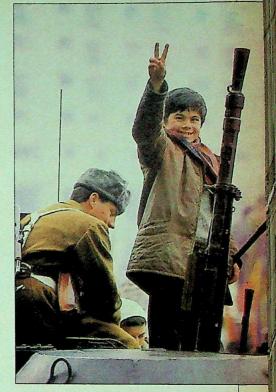
more grim. From the moment I land in Bucharest to the instant I cross the yellow line on my way back at the Otopeni international airport two sounds persist: "Change monee mister?" and "You singulgentalman?" In fact, the first words of welcome from the waiter in the restaurant: "Gentalman, you want two girls?" "No thanks. Just the steak."

"Do you want two boys instead?"

Sitting on the adjoining table, flourishing his bejewelled fingers, is yet another guest obviously from our part of the world. Majid is Pakistani and ably represents the subcontinental entrepreneurship. He works for the nightclubs in Copenhagen which need girls with good bodies and the inclination to bare. Girls in Western Europe are too expensive. So he comes once a month to Bulgaria and Romania, and takes away the best ones from the nightclubs at ridiculous wages. "For each night's performance I get \$500. And the girls make money on the side and even have a chance to stay back." He barely gets the time to explain before two almost bare-bodied "ballerinas", vying for his attention, shoo me away.

Till December, Romania was one of the most brutally controlled societies. Today it has opened up with a vengeance. Rampant prostitution is also due to the hunger for the dollar, as more and more people queue up outside the western embassies for visas. Ceausescu rarely allowed foreign travel. "We have promised passports to all citizens now," explains an official of the new Government. "But we have no application forms, no booklets. Ceausescu never printed many.'

The more acutely felt, however, are shortages of food, fuel, medicines, electricity and contraceptives. Romanian black humour: "What is the difference between a Nazi concentration camp and Ceausescu's Romania?" "The camps at least had gas and electricity." To increase



Far from being guardians of an oppressive regime the army in Romania helped people topple it





Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennal and eGangotri Casbury's ASSIC SELECTIC cc-Because there's know to chocolates than chocolate his country's stagnant population, Ceausescu had banned contraception and decreed every woman produce at least four children whether she got married or not. This, combined with state patronage to promiscuity, had disastrous consequences as the rising number of babies with AIDS in Romanian hospitals now

HE Romanians show much less patience on the streets of Bucharestbattered by the uncleared snow of two months and still showing scars of the battle fought between the pro-revolution military and Ceausescu's loyal Securitate in December. Every evening, hundreds light candles and lamps at strategic points

the story of today's Romania and, indeed of the East Bloc most succinctly—where the new revolutionaries just haven't had the time to think of a new system to replace the one they are taking apart.

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Nowhere was the change as welcome—and bloody—as in Romania. Till the entire facade of power built around Ceausescu came crashing down so sud. denly in December, there had never been even an incipient movement against him. Not even one based in the West which patronised him for challenging Soviet power. Many, waving flags and placards still find it difficult to get over the exhilaration of leading the rest of their lives without Ceausescu. The most popular slogan with the crowds—whether pro or anti-Iliescu-is a war-cry from the Spanish bullfighters' ring adapted by local football fans, "Oley, ole-ole-ole" followed by "Ceausescu numaye" (Ceausescu is no more).

At Slobozia, 150 km away, Ion Pesu, editor of a local newspaper rationalises the euphoria: "You keep a man blindfolded for 40 years. Then you take him into a glittering shopping mall and remove the blindfold. We are just as dazed. We don't know what to do.'

"People say I may not have food or heating in my house. But at least I am free, There is total euphoria," reflects Amiya Bhose, who came to Bucharest in the late '50s as the wife of an Indian official and stayed back to become the foremost authority on Mihai Eminescu, widely referred to as Romania's Tagore. "I thought if a society could be culturally and intellectually so rich under dictatorship, what will it be like when free," she says and waits for the flowering of a new, free Romania.



Empty shops in Romania are typical of the entire region

shows. "My wife and I would wait a whole month to get a chance for safe sexual intimacy," explains Kristian, driving me back from the oil city of Ploiesti to Bucharest in the evening when he moonlights with his personal car. "A condom cost 500 lei, a fourth of my salary. And you could go to jail if you were caught with it." Now he is patient. "Let them import food first. Other things can wait a bit more."

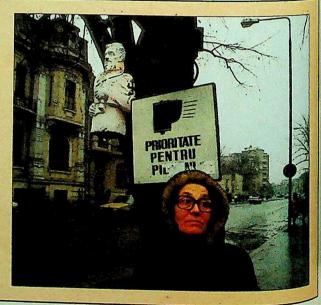
in the city where many revolutionaries fell and then march in processionsagainst or for Iliescu-to the Foreign Ministry building where the new caretaker government is lodged, ringed by a whole regiment of T-72 tanks.

But the tanks fly the Romanian tricolour with the old communist national emblem-red star et al-scissored out. The flag with the hollow centre tells

WIDOW OF A REVOLUTION

The fighting in December consumed the husband of Monica Philippe, 66, a retired factory worker, leaving her to fend for herself. She now plans to spend the rest of her lifetime working to reform one of the orphanages built by Ceausescu to feed recruits to his dreaded Securitate.

eausescu was worse than Hitler. Worse than Idi Amin. If my husband died fighting him I would say he died so the rest of the world will live better and without fear."



H S

THE excitement on

the streets is no less in Prague despite Czechoslovakia's pride in having brought about a "velvet revolution" to bring down the pro-Moscow communist regime. Processions form from almost nowhere every evening and march, either to the Wenceslas Square in the heart of the town or to the picture postcard Old Town Square. This evening, the excitement at the square is even greater as the city is felicitating the US Secretary of State James Baker at the Town Hall adding impetus to the anti-Soviet rally going on simultaneously here. Amid the persistent shouts of "At Jize Havel" (Long Live Havel, the new President), crowds wave banners asking the Soviet troops to leave. One which draws derisive laughter each time it is waved reads: "Jdi Domu Ivane, Zahyba TiNatasa" (Go home Ivan, your Natashais

sleeping with other men). Many others

just say, "Get out". Or, "They came in in

one night. We'll give them two to leave".

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For many like student Martina Kasparova, communism, which never found roots in his country, is dead and gone but Soviet troops still remain as its legacy. "The Germans lost the Second World War. We Czechs won it. And yet we have had an army of occupation here for 22 years," she says and the clutch of bannerwaving processionists around her cries "Okupanti, Kreml Va's Vola" (Occupants, Kremlin is calling you).

The hatred for the "invaders", who ended the Prague Spring of 1968 so





"Go home Ivan, your Natasha is sleeping with someone else," Czech protestors tell Soviets

rudely, often transforms into affection for the West. Baker's address to the Charles University was broadcast live on national radio. And one evening thousands queued up on Wenceslas Square to collect pins of the crossed Czech and US flags being distributed by the US-Czech Friendship Society. The square also displays banners welcoming home countryman Bata, who left Czechoslovakia to carve out an empire from footwear in greener pastures, notably India.

The victory of the West is stamped all over at the downtown headquarters of the Civic Forum, the ruling front led by playwright Vaclay Havel. Photocopiers are Canon, the fax is Panasonic, telephones Sanyo, computers Hewlett-Packard. Only the typewriters are East German. Where does all this come from? "From our well-wishers around the world," says Madam Ryslinkova, spokesperson of the forum. Is it a victory of the West in Prague? "It is a victory of democracy totalitarianism over thrust on our people." She is angry.



New revolutions mean new martyrs and a new spirit

ONCEDING defeat less than five kilometres away is Dr Joseph Hora, the scholarly, grim-faced official spokesman for the Czech Communist Party who self-admittedly has a tough task: to explain to hordes of foreign newsmen what went wrong with the communist movement in Czechoslo. vakia and what the van. quished party plans to do now. The party has just gone through massive purges, ridding itself of a leadership that was identified with the totalitarian, pro-Moscow regime of the past.

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"It will be very difficult to come out of this crisis." he says, sipping studiously at his cup of green tea. "The problem is that our movement fell on wrong ways. There were leaders who led privileged lives. The one-party system too corrupted us by giving us a monopoly on power. Such things are suicidal for communism. introspection The continues.

The communist who survived the velvet revolution of November and then the purges is also a realist. "We don't stand

ANTI-SOVIET ACTIVIST

For a week Martina Kasparova, 19, stayed awake, leading bands of "velvet revolutionaries" in November. Now she wants to seal the victory by forcing Soviet troops to leave.

e won the war and the Germans lost it. But they're free and we an occupied country for 22 years. How illogical?"



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his crisis, ng studip of green em is that t fell on here were privileged party sysoted us by nopoly on hings are munism.' rospection unist who

elvet revo mber and s is also a on't stand much of a chance in the coming elections as the whole revolution was brought about on a platform of anti-communism." He is also remorseful: "The party had lost the moral right to govern the society. The sooner we return to the role we played in pre-war Czechoslovakia, the better. We also have to learn from Indian communists, the only ones in the world to have prospered in a multi-party system.

On yet another plane he is firm in his loyalties: "Yes, we too stand for the withdrawal of Soviet troops. But in a reasonable, not rude way. After all, but for the changes in the Soviet Union itself, would you have seen the rallies you saw in Prague today?" And finally he is optimistic: "Our party does not really foresee classical capitalism coming to Czechoslovakia. If that is brought in, it will also bring in its socio-economic inequities. Then we will have our chance to come back."

But at the bottom of it all there is the acceptance of the fact that the movement became victim of a doctrine that became dogma and an ideology that grew into an insurmountable obstacle.



BUT one obstacle that history ultimately did not find insurmountable now lies in a

shambles along the line on the world map that separated the two Germanies. It is rapidly disintegrating into little curios: paperweights, plaques, ash-trays, or as just a few more pieces of rock in some millionaires' cactus garden. For 40 years it had arrogantly divided the world into the East and the West and stood as the symbol of the Iron Curtain. Today this is where people go picnicking. Or jogging.

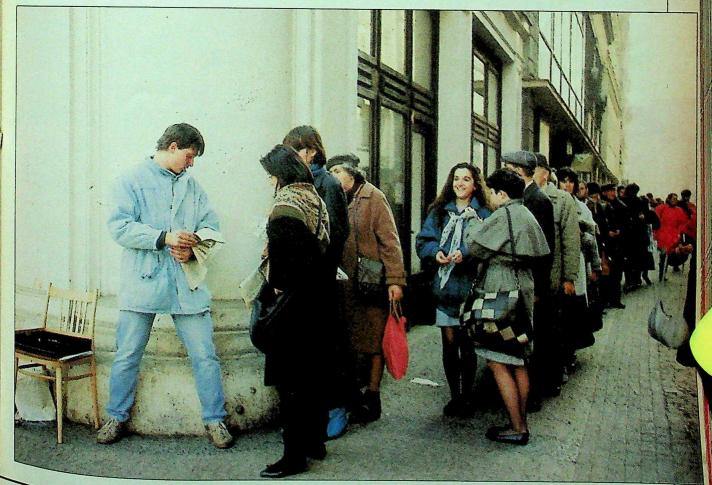
Erhardt Schmidt still can't get over the fact that it is so easy to cross the wall that was once guarded by mines, electronic sensors, sharp-shooters and killer hounds. Now he just flourishes his passport and feints past the border guards much in the fashion of a football forward, then jogs into the West, Brandenburg Gate behind his back. Twenty minutes later he is chugging his way back to his

little apartment in the East. But he is not so sure how long he would be doing that. "I want to move to Munchen (Munich) and set up a business. My wife is not so sure as yet. But she will say yes.'

Even for the citizens of the East Bloc's most prosperous and healthy nation the lure of capitalism is irresistible. Three more decades and, at the current rate of migration, East Germany's population would be reduced to zero. But before that the Germanies should be one again, and a superpower again in fields ranging from economy to sport. Even military, if the Germans choose to be. No one questions the inevitability of the two systems finally marrying to produce a united Germany. I ask Ekhardt: "There is capitalism on one side and communism on the other. How do you expect the two nations and systems to merge so easily?" "But the people on the two sides are Germans," he answers. Unassailable.

Walking out into the West, by the side of the firmly leashed Alsatian, is yet

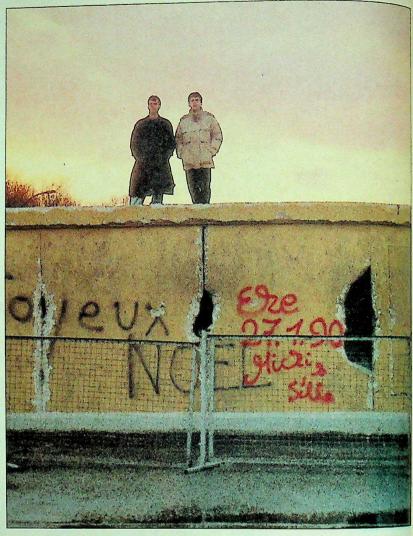
The newspaper queues in Prague show how people value what they've been missing for 40 years



another East German family. "Yes, the fatherland should unite. Yes, communism was terrible. Yes, American and NATO troops must immediately leave West Germany just as the Russians should leave the East. Yes, people in the West are much richer than us and so what if we win more medals at the olympics," the young engineer, accompanied by his wife and mother, blabbers on.

"What's your name?" I ask. The response is poignantly shocking and you don't have to know German to tell what the old matriarch is saying: "You can't talk to strangers like that. Don't give your name." She turns around and runs, tugging at her son's sleeve and screams at Bhawan Singh not to take a picture. "You see, she still is not sure the world has changed," explains an apologetic son, but follows her nevertheless.

On the other side, the West Germans are also learning a few hometruths even as they savour victory. East Germany brings with it\$20 billion worth of foreign debts. It also brings a bad environment, run-down industry and a currency which no longer holds any relevance in the new world. Some have already begun to protest. About increasing crime in West Berlin which is blamed on the poorer cousins from the East and decreasing wages because of the availability of cheaper labour from the East. Some are patronising. Like the jogger from the East, Michael Dreykluff, a prosperous dentist from the West, who likes to go for morning walks across Brandenburg Gate. I ask him how to tell an East German from a West German. "Just look at their shoes," he says. "If they are bad, they are from the East '



■ The Berlin Wall now symbolises a rewriting of history



DESPERATE JOBSEEKER

After waiting in indecision for weeks **Stephan Weirich**, 26, has decided to migrate to West Germany in search of work, an apartment and a car so he could finally marry his girlfriend of six years and settle down.

here must be some good in socialism. We have no unemployment. But why are unemployment doles in FRG higher than our wages?"

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AD shoes is only one of the problems. The real trouble is wages. Cars. Even Dmarriage. Stefan hitches a ride with me at the Czech-GDR border. A motor mechanic by the day and chess player at night, he has come to meet his girl-friend of six years, and their three-year-old daughter. "We want to get married. But you need an apartment. A car. We can stay in a temporary place. But what to do without a car. You've seen our Trabants (the notorious East German car with a two-stroke engine). For even one of them I have to wait seven years. Or I go to the blackmarket and pay twice the price. It

just isn't worth it."

Stefan says he will wait. "Very soon I will have decided about the future and marriage. An aunt in Hamburg has been asking me to come and help her with business there. Maybe I will go and do that." A communist party member till last November, what does he think of socialism?"There must be a lot of things about it that are good. For example, we have no unemployment. But when you look at FRG, where the unemployment doles are higher than our wages, you begin to question the system." As we approach Dresden, his destination, I ask him about the fabled Dresden China. "Do they still make it? How expensive is it?" "All we make are bad typewriters, bad cars and bad environment. Forget China.'

From Shermetyevo to Brandenburg Gate people overwhelmingly articulate the same cynicism of the past, in six different languages, but they also have hope for the future. That they are finally saying goodbye to a system that failed or got outdated is not to be questioned any longer. But they are also all facing the same challenge: if this system was so bad or outdated what is best for the future? A modified form of the same system? There certainly aren't many buyers for that except some in the Soviet Union. The

> other options range from the Swedish system to the Indian. But whichever model each nation finally chooses the verdict is unanimous at least in favour of one system: Democracy.

-SHEKHAR GUPTA in East Europe and Photographs by BHAWAN SINGH

Julio Ribeiro visits a part of Romania that is forever India



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Honouring the Indian Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me: That there's some corner of a foreign field That is forever England.

-The Soldier

HEN Rupert Brooke wrote those lines in 1914, as the world was consumed by the first great war, he forgot that the British were not fighting it all by themselves. There were also a million or so brave Indians manning the trenches and leading the charges along with them. Thousands of them died in far away lands. But none as far away and forgotten as the 68 who succumbed to the notoriously brutal conditions in the German prisoner of war camps in Slobozia, a small city in the grain bowl of eastern Romania, 150 km from

As the German occupation forces left, the local citizens built a separate cemetery for the Indians and called it the Indian War Heroes' Memorial.

Now it is customary for the Indian ambassador in Bucharest and the military attache to visit the cemetery on January 30, the Indian martyr's day. They are accompanied by the mayor and other officials of the town, the local military garrison commander Romanian soldiers who reverse arms and buglers who sound the last post.

This year the Indian ambassador, along with military attache Colonel Kapil Vij, also had a few medals to boast of. "Were you in the army, your excellency?" asked Adrian Andriescu, the mayor of Slobozia. "No, I was in the police," said the ambassador. "What was your rank?" "Like that of a general." "Isn't that the same as being

in the army?" "No, in my country the police is all civil. I ended up doing a bit of fighting though. Melba and I were even wounded," said Julio Francis Ribeiro. pointing to his sprightly wife.

Cemeteries look the same the world over, decade after decade, untouched by history. But for an Indian, a look at this one is a moving experience. There is Tirbhan Gurung of 4th Gurkhas, committed to fire, Nawab Khan of 40 Pathan, and Sadhu Singh of 58th Vaughan's Rifles with the inscription reading "Waheguru". In 1916, before the advent of aircraft, there were actually Indians from so many different faiths fighting and dying together in what is even now a distant, unfamiliar land for Indians. And we still have communal riots back home.



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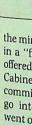


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ANDHRA PRADESH **Dubious Deal**

• A senior IAS officer C. Arjuna Rao has created a flutter among bureaucrats by protesting against being shifted from the post of secretary, housing and municipal administration, just 12 days after he took charge. Rao has alleged in a 15-page letter to Chief Minister Chenna Reddy that K. Ranga Rao, the minister in charge of the department, was victimising him for having looked into 36 files in which the minister had granted exemptions under the urban land ceiling laws. Arjuna Rao pointed out that only the chief minister was competent to grant concessions under the rules.

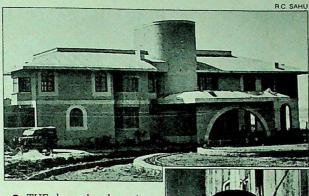
The issue was politicised after BJP General Secretary Bandaru Dattatreya charged

Ranga Rao: on the defensive



the minister of being involved in a "fishy deal". Ranga Rao offered to step down. But the Cabinet decided to ask the commissioner of inquiries to go into the deal. Before he went on a three-month leave, Arjuna Rao charged that the Chief Minister's Secretary K.R. Paramahamsa had prevented him and other officers from meeting the chief minister. The fact that Chenna Reddy is not too keen on powwows with the bureaucrats is well known. A senior bureaucrat remarked: "The situation is similar to that in a temple when a new priest takes charge. He thinks he also owns god."

MADHYA PRADESH A Taxing Situation



 THE days ahead are indeed going to be tough for former Madhya Pradesh chief minister and MPCC(I) chief Arjun Singh. He will soon have to answer not too comfortable questions from the Income Tax Department which has reopened the case relating to the construction of his stately 9,000 sq ft mansion near Kerwa Dam in Bhopal. Also, the judicial commission inquiring into the Churhat Lottery scandal with which Arjun Singh was linked is expected to take up the case following a writ filed by BIP leader Kailash Joshi.

Arjun Singh had claimed in his income tax returns that the marble palace cost him Rs 17.60 lakh. But official estimates put the cost of construction above Rs 60 lakh. To add to Singh's discomfort the Lok Ayukta is also looking into the

Arjun Singh (inset) and his mansion: under scrutiny

cost and source of funding of the house. "I have explained everything to the income tax department. I would not disclose my assets to anyone else as a matter of principle," says a defiant Singh. It will, however, be a long time before he can start enjoying peacefully the comforts of his heavily guarded mansion.

KERALA **Kidnapping Councillors**

• CPI(M) supporters in Kerala recently resorted to terror tactics when they kidnapped two councillors of the United Democratic Front in the Trivandrum Municipal Corporation. The reason: to ensure that the Left Democratic Front (LDF) nominees win in the elections for the various committees of the corporation.

The LDF received a jolt when a senior councillor of the CPI(M), Stanley Satyaneshan, irked at not being made the party candidate for the post of mayor, contested as a

rebel and was elected with the support of the UDF. A CPI(M) rebel was elected deputy mayor too and six councillors crossed over to the UDF.

The CPI(M) did not want to lose control of the corporation committees too and took the violent way out: hijacking two UDF councillors. The gambit worked and the LDF got control of two of the three corporation committees. The councillors were released after the elections were over and the CPI(M) leaders have not yet condemned the incident.

BIHAR **Coal Games**

· YET another attempt by the Central Government to break the backbone of the Dhanbad mafia seems to have floundered. The brainwave of the Central Government was to offer the Rs 30-crore worth of annual coal transport contracts awarded by the Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) at Dhanbad to ex-servicemen's cooperatives sponsored by the director-general of resettlement instead of to the regulars belonging to the mafia.

All help was given to the six newly-formed ex-servicemen's cooperatives to do the job including preferential rates. Everything was hunkydory until the Dhanbad Dep-Commissioner Ram uty Sewak Sharma IAS, discovered that "the contractors have purchased the names of the ex-servicemen". In other

KRISHNA MURARI KISHAN



Illegal mining in Dhanbad

words the mafia still had the contracts.

According to Sharma one ex-serviceman based in Delhi said he was being paid Rs 15,000 every month for just lending his name. Inquiring magistrates could spot no ex-servicemen nor were the workers on the spot aware of any cooperative. According to the BCCL, contracts for three cooperatives have been cancelled and the working of the others is being monitored.

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KERALA

Labour Pangs

Militant trade unionism has driven companies out of Kerala, discouraged entrepreneurs and turned the state into an industrial graveyard.

F labour can stand tall anywhere in India, it is in Kerala. The small southern state provides its workers the highest wages and best working conditions in the country, under an umbrella of protective legislation which clearly regards exploitation as a dirty word.

This should have created a happy and responsive labour force. What it has created instead is a class of coddled workers, highly conscious of their rights but unconcerned about responsibilities.

Consider these facts:

► Headload workers earn, on an average, Rs 2,500 and some make Rs 5,000 a month. They get what they ask, otherwise they won't let goods be lifted.

► Last year, cashew worth over Rs 5 crore could not be shipped from Cochin Port, thus missing an export deadline. Cause: the CPI(M)'s trade union wing, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), wanted its own men to be used for loading.

▶ In the Cochin Port, 51 workers handle a container for loading and unloading, while the same job is done by only 18 in Madras. So while it costs around Rs 2,300 to unload a container at Cochin, the cost in Madras is just

The consequences are not unexpected:

Rs 225.

Kerala is one of the most industrially backward states with only 210 large and medium-scale industries. Not one private entrepreneur has come forward in the last 10 years to set up a major industrial unit. Existing ones prefer to move out rather than concede unreasonable demands.

► The annual remittances of Rs 600 crore from the Gulf should have fuelled an industrial boom. But thanks to the state's labour situation, most prefer to invest their money in non-productive assets like gold and real estate.

 Kerala's cashew industry once accounted for nearly half of the world's exports and employed over one lakh workers. But unreasonable demands forced a large chunk of the industry to move to Tamil Nadu where wages were less than half those in Kerala. The story is the same in the coir and beedi industry.

The state's labour militancy worries Dr K.N. Raj, economist and former adviser to the prime minister. "If the culture of extortion by labour does not end," he warns, "more and more industries will shift to Karnataka and Tamil Nadu." Even many leftists agree that the trade unions have gone too far. Says C. Achutha Menon, cpi leader and former chief minister: "If we go on like this, resisting mechanisation and making unreasonable demands without evolving a work ethic, we are in for a bleak future.'

But trade union leaders are hardly

preparing to furl their banners. K.N.

ford to be soft on industrial management The political cost would be too steep.

photographs by

Over the years, trade unions and politics have become inseparably en twined. Labour unions serve as vote and money banks for political parties. In the last assembly elections, CITU (member ship: 4.18 lakh) is estimated to have donated over Rs 1 crore to the CPI(M).

In return, the labour force gets doles grants and pensions, and special treatment. When workers resort to must power, as they often do, the police choos not to intervene. No one wants to k dubbed anti-labour. Says V.P. Marikar



Illustration by AJIT NINAN & ANIL SHAPE

"If extortion by labour does not end, more industries will shift out."

Dr K.N. RAJ Former adviser to prime minister

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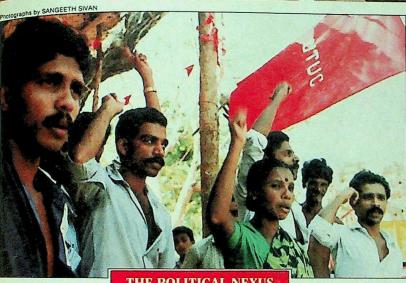
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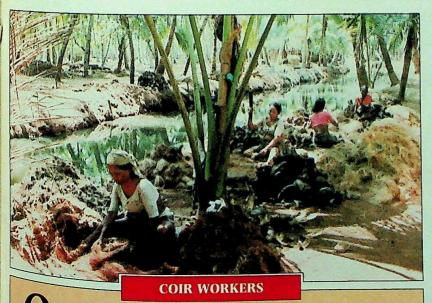


"CITU will remain quiet only as long as the CPI(M) is in power."

VAYALAR RAVI Former home minister



ince trade unions serve as vote banks, no political party takes a stand that will be seen as anti-labour.



utrageous wage demands have forced the oncethriving coir industry to move out of the state.

state president of the Congress(I)'s Indian National Trade Union Congress: "As politicians use the working class, the working class has learned to use politicians.'

Astrade unionists came to carry clout, unions mushroomed. There are as many as 12 in the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC), for instance, and the state has over 10,000 registered unions. Such a multiplicity of unions leads to impossible situations. Says Labour Minister K. Pankajakshan: "Each union is involved in upmanship to compete and so makes unreasonable demands.'

THE problems start even before an industry begins production. Starting with construction, disputes arise about who is to be employed as every union tries to push in its own members. Next comes the demand to regularise casual labourers who helped build the factory.

Says G. Subash, secretary of the Cochin Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) Industries Association: "There was such tremendous potential here. But entrepreneurs have been scared away as unions in the area are dictating whom to employ and what wages should be paid." In 1983, when the CEPZ started, 65 units were approved. Till now, just three have started exports and only 13 are coming up. If it had not been plagued by labour problems, over 10,000 people would have been directly employed, an important factor in a state that has 30 lakh unemployed with one lakh graduates being added every year to their ranks.

The situation is much the same at Cochin Port. Started in 1936, the port held out promise of becoming one of the country's leading export outlets. It had a fine, strategically located, natural harbour. But labour disputes and high wages chased business away. Result: accumulated losses of Rs 24 crore. Says G. Krishnan, chairman, Cochin Port Trust: "Only a determined effort by trade unionists to put the interests of the state before their own will save Kerala.'

That could be some time coming. For militancy has paid off-at least in the short run. Says Mohanan, 32, a

"If we do not evolve a work ethic, we are in for a bleak future."

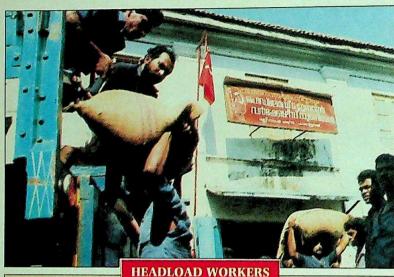
> C. ACHUTHA MENON Former CPI chief minister



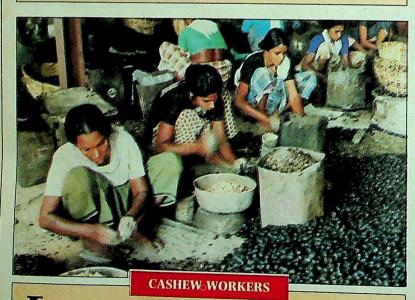


"We have decided not to bow to any unfair demands by workers."

K.R. GOWRI Industry Minister



erala's headload workers are India's highest paid. The average wage is Rs 2,500 a month.



abour militancy has forced a large chunk of the cashew industry to move to Tamil Nadu.

headloader in Trivandrum: "We are the highest paid headloaders in the country because of the trade unions' determination to give us a good deal. There is nothing wrong with that and if industrialists make money, they can pay,'

With such attitudes, it's not surprising that trade unionists often make unreasonable demands. The loss-making Chakola Textile Mills was forced to pay 12 per cent bonus last year, while Apollo Tyres had to pay about 31 per cent.

But high-pitched demands often prove to be counter-productive. Gwalior Rayons at Mavoor reopened recently after a three-year shutdown. The Government had to offer hefty concessions to the Birlas to get it reopened because nearly 4,000 workers were jobless. These are now reporting back to work without any of their demands having been met. They have learnt their lesson the hard way.

While managements have come to realise the need to be tough, Industry Minister K.R. Gowri too seems to have veered around to the view that labour militancy is self-defeating. Says she: "We have decided not to bow to any unfair demands by workers as it will cripple industry." And deprecating labour violence, Chief Minister E.K. Nayanar said the state would strive to create a climate which combined fair wages with a fair profit.

These moves on the part of the Government may already have begun to pay dividends. The Tatas have agreed to invest in a titanium dioxide plant in Kerala and the Birlas too are seriously considering investing in the state.

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Rival political parties, though, are sceptical of the Government's change of heart. Former home minister Vayalar Ravi, a trade unionist himself, argues: 'CITU is silent now but once the Congress(I) comes to power, it will be used by the CPI(M) to create trouble." Whether the communists, with their avowed weakness for labour, will be able to surmount narrow political considerations is debatable. But only such a middle path will enable Kerala to rejoin the -RAMESH MENON industrial race.

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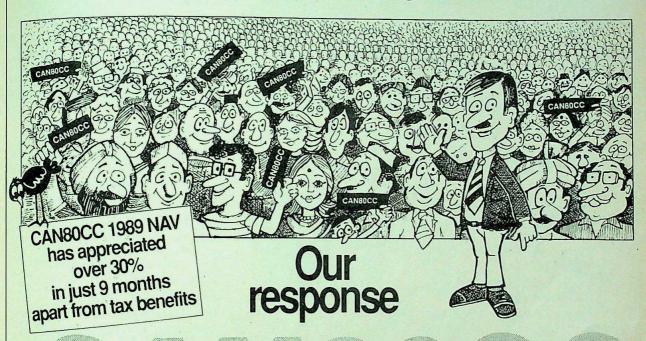
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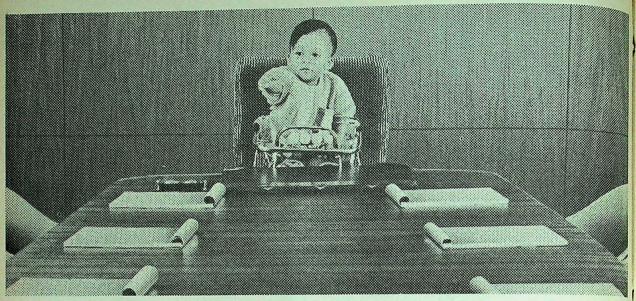
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 $WO\,corporate\,giants, one \,in\,India\,and\,the\,other\,in\,the\,US, have \,been\,locked\,in\,a$ $legal\ dispute\ for\ the\ last\ 21\ years.\ And\ the\ tussle\ is\ still\ continuing.\ Way\ back\ in$ 1969, the American General Electric Corporation (GEC) claimed that a sum of \$2.5 million (then around Rs 1.9 crore) was owed to it for supply of turbines to the Renusagar Power Company which is a subsidiary of the Birla-controlled Hindustan Aluminium Corporation. The Birlas disagreed. And literally went all over India and the world to fight their case.

Over the years, the dispute has travelled from the district court at Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh to the high courts at Allahabad, Bombay and Delhi. It was also taken to the International Chamber of Commerce at Paris and London for arbitration. In the meantime, on account of interest accumulation, the disputed amount went up to a whopping \$13 million—which is around Rs 22 crore at today's exchange rates. Last fortnight, with the final settlement of the case still pending, in an interim order the Supreme Court of India directed the Birla company to deposit half of the required amount in the Bombay High Court and, at the same time, allowed GEC to withdraw it after furnishing a bank guarantee.

MALE COUTURE

OVE over, madam. Now, it is the fashion-conscious Indian male who is being wooed with a vengeance. .The Rs 120-crore Modern group of companies is planning to set up a chain of 24 exclusive men's boutiques all over the country. Piggybacking on the success of its Amadeus range of suiting fabrics, the Amadeus label will now be tagged on to a diverse range of products. These include readymade shirts and trousers, belts, shaving cream, colognes, aftershave lotions and balms. The first boutique will be opened next month at Jaipur, the group's headquarters. With this new line of business, group concern Modern Suitings hopes to increase its turnover from this year's projected level of Rs 45 crore to Rs 60 crore in 1990-91.

EXPANSION PLANS

HE largest private sector producer of milk products, the Rs150-crore Indana group, now plans to expand in south India too. Having carved out hefty market shares for its products-instant coffee, ghee and pickles-in the north and the west, it now intends investing around Rs 30 crore on five new units in and around Bangalore. These units-which should be completed by late-1991-will produce instant coffee, biscuits, bread, tea and packaged readyto-serve foods. Company spokesmen claim that the group's annual turnover will more than treble in three years' time.

TOUGH BARGAINING

AST fortnight the state-owned Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) raised a syndicated loan of \$70 million (Rs 119 crore) in Hong Kong with the Bank of Tokyo's help. Market sources reveal that the terms of the loan were extremely favourable for the country. That's the good news. Now for the kicker: the icici transaction may be the last of its kind. After a five-year-long party, Indian financial institutions will find it tough to raise funds abroad on favourable terms. Reason: international banks are concerned about the country's rising trade and budget deficits, as well as its ricing its rising foreign debt. In spite of India's spotless record in meeting foreign debt. In spite of mula a specific interest foreign debt obligations, banks now insist on higher interest on the cards. interest rates. A season of tough bargaining is on the cards.

RURAL CONSUMERISM

T'S not merely the urban upper and middle classes who have been splurging of late—consumerism is also spreading fast to the rural areas of India. At least that's what a study conducted by the Vadodara-based market research organisation, Operations Research Group, claims. According

CONSUMPTION OF CONSUMER GOODS IN RURAL INDIA: ON THE RISE 300 (Rs crore Z

to the study, people living in villages are spending more on soaps, toothpaste, shaving products, cosmetics and other consumer products. The study estimates that the rural market for such products shot up from Rs 733 crore to Rs 1.500 crore between 1984 and 1988.

Some other interesting findings: the growth rate was the highest in the northern region, followed by the west and the south. Surprisingly, consumption of cosmetics in the otherwise economically-backward eastern region was as high as that in the north.

APPLE CHIPS IN

XCITING times are ahead for the Bombay-based Apple Industries. The company—which is actively engaged in teaching and training computer personnel—recently roped in Minoo Mody, who had quit the boards of directors of several Tata group companies last year. Mody. contrary to popular expectations is not going to lead a retired life. In fact, he is now to become chairman of a new export-oriented venture which is being set up by Apple at the Santa Cruz Electronics Export Processing Zone. The Rs 10-crore venture. which will be exporting computer software, is expected to go on stream later this year.

Tisn't the best of times. There are few indications that the Indian economy, large segments of which had started slowing down from around the middle of last year, will bounce back in a hurry.

On the contrary, corporate chieftains are betting that the next budget will bring bad news for them: fresh doses of taxes, curbs on imports and a pronounced rural slant in policies.

The writing on the wall: industry profits which had jumped impressively between 1987-88 and 1988-89 may come down this year. The downbeat mood is enhanced by the uncertainty about the exact contours of the eighth plan (1990-95). These will be known

only towards August or September. Till then, the pundits of Yojana Bhavan—which houses the Planning Commission—will prefer to mouth homilies instead of chewing on hard statistics.

The fact that budget deficits have touched alarming proportions has reduced the Government's options. "What is worse is that we have been borrowing more and more on capital account to finance current revenue expenditures-this has played havoc with the economy and cannot be allowed to go on," says D.H. Pai Panandiker, secretarygeneral of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Compounding these woes is the country's precarious foreign exchange reserves position.

Corporate captains realise that the Government's political compulsions will force it to adopt a stridently pro-poor stance. Which means that any policy change that even mildly suggests fa-

vours for business is taboo. "It is unrealistic to expect major concessions for industry at this time—still, the overall thrust of liberalisation should not be reversed," says N.A. Soonavala, director, Tata Sons.

The last few years have witnessed the rapid expansion of many markets which have resulted in sharp increases in corporate sales and profitability. Last fortnight, the Bombay-based research organisation, the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy, released a study ECONOMY

An Austere Phase

A slow-down in growth is indicated

which reveals that private Indian companies performed exceptionally well in 1988-89 (see chart). And certain industries such as tea, coffee, chemicals, aluminium, tyres, paper and shipping performed creditably last year.

But not all sectors gained during the much-vaunted era of liberalisation. Cotton textile and jute units have consistently reported losses during the last five years. Faced with surplus capacity, ce-

ment companies went into the red in 1987-88 and 1988-89. Sections of the engineering industry have slowed down. And saleable steel

Chart by B.K. SHARMA

banks has decelerated considerably," argues B.B. Bhattacharya, professor, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, Part of the shortfall in credit may have be

Part of the shortfall in credit may have been met from the capital market

Nevertheless, everyone agrees that the resource crunch is all too real. A number capital-intensive mega-projects which were proposed in the recent past may never get off the drawing-board For instance, of the eight petrochemical complexes proposed—each involving an investment of around Rs 3,000 crore-only three are likely to come up in the next five years. Similarly, of the six fertiliser projects (including expansion of existing ones) on the anvil, only three may see the light of day during the eighth plan period. There just isn't enough money for more, concede highly placed government officials.

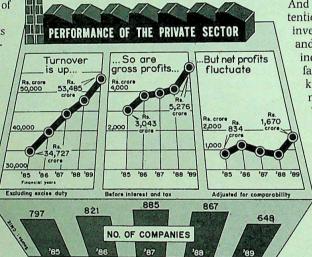
And given the Government's intention to earmark half of the total investible resources of the Centre and the states for the rural sector. industry is mentally prepared to face a squeeze. Says Ramakrishna Hegde, deputy chairman, Planning Commission: 'We will expect both public and private sector concerns to plough back more of their internally-generated surpluses and go to financial institutions for their fund requirements. We want budgetary support to losing public sector undertakings to be reduced considerably."

Independent economists point out that such pious sentiments have been expressed many times in the past without anything being done to implement them. Similarly, no solutions to the problems relating to closure of sick units are in

IN

sight. Further, if substantial funds are diverted to rural areas and consequently, drastic changes are made in the pattern of public investment, it may lead to recession in some industries—and not necessarily only in the 'sunset' sectors like jute and textiles.

Adding to the uncertainty in the economic climate are the inconclusive discussions on the eighth plan. When questioned about what the intersectoral investment allocations are likely to be, a Planning Commission



- ▶ Net sales increased by 21 per cent between 1987-88 and 1988-89, the highest growth in the last five years.
- ▶ Net profits went up by 58 per cent in 1988-89. In 1986-87 and 1987-88, they had fallen by 9 per cent and 6 per cent respectively.
- ▶ Nearly 400 companies spent Rs 9,151 crore on expanding assets in 1988-89 implying a big jump of 115 per cent.

production by the public sector Steel Authority of India Limited has stagnated over the last two years.

Other figures too indicate a slow-down. Recent statistics Issued by the Reserve Bank show that bank credit to industry and trade between November and end-January stood at just over Rs 3,000 crore—about half the amount advanced in the corresponding period of 1988-89. "An important reason why the credit advanced has come down is that the rate of growth of deposits of

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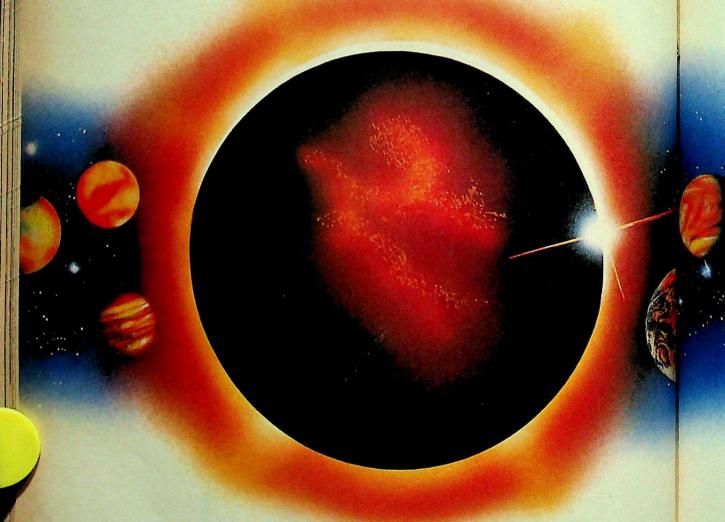
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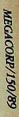
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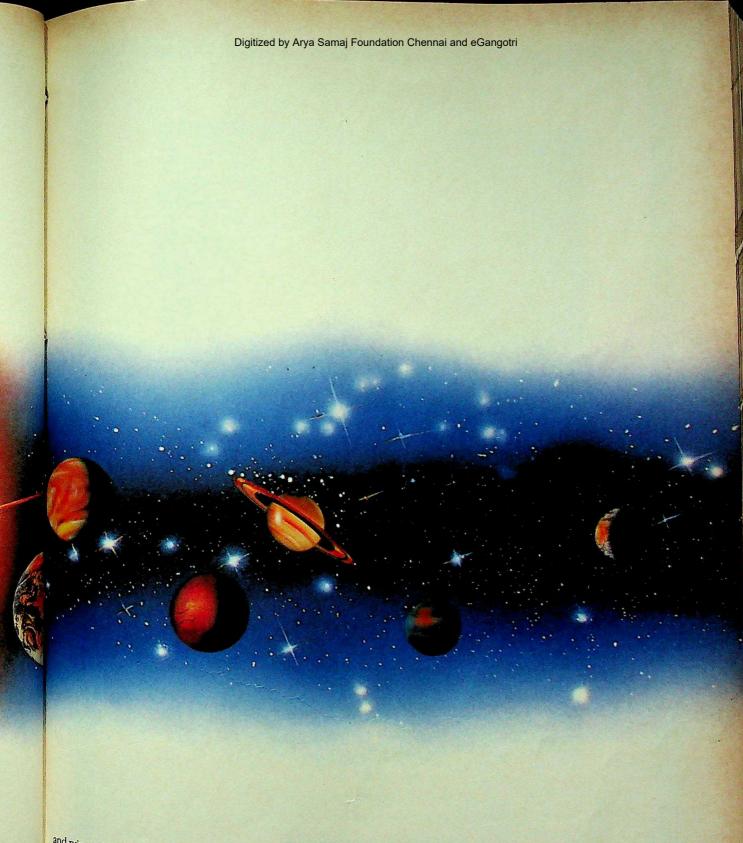
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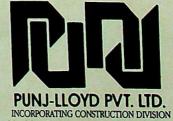
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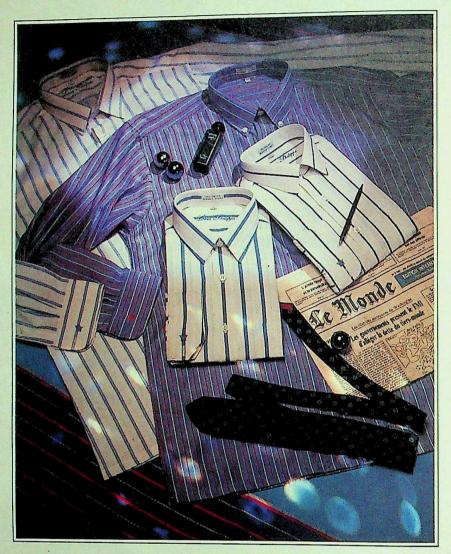
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member admitted: "Frankly I don't know—I wonder if anybody is clear about what is going on." That admission just about sums up the current thinking about the plan.

Even within the Government there is no unanimity about how the extra funds meant for the rural sector will be spent. During a recent round of discussions on next year's financial outlay for the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, an interesting altercation took place. Deputy Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister Devi Lal insisted that the department's plan outlay for 1990-91 should not be less than Rs 1,250 crore against Rs 850 crore during the current year.

Then a group of secretaries to the Union Government decided that this amount should be scaled down to Rs 1,060 crore. When the matter eventually came up before the Planning Commission, it decided that the department's outlay should not exceed Rs 905 crore. And Yojana Bhavan's logic was clear: the latest trends indicated that during the current fiscal year, the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation would not be able to spend more than Rs 800 crore—a good Rs 50 crore less than the plan allocation. So what's the point asking for more, the Planning Commission questioned. That left the Tau stumped.

In other words, even if the Government wants to, it may noteasily be able to spend more on agriculture in the absence of clearly formulated schemes. Says an official: "It sounds impressive to talk of generating growth by creating more jobs and spending more on rural development—the point is that all this is easier said than done." Despite such scepticism, the rhetoric continues unabated.

The Government has shouted its intentions from the roof-tops: create more employment, check inflation, spend more in rural areas, decentralise the planning process, promote handlooms and cot-



RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE

"Some projects may have to be shelved"

IN his new incarnation as deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, former Karnataka chief minister Ramakrishna Hedge, 63, today finds himself warding off impossible demands not only from Central ministers but also from chief ministers all over the country. But that's part of his job. Excerpts from an interview with Principal Correspondent Paranjoy Guha Thakurta:

On the 1990-91 annual plan:

It has not been possible to fully reflect the new Government's priorities in the coming year's plan. Still a beginning has been made. Last year around 37-38 per cent of the total investment by the Centre and the states went to the rural sector and we want this figure to come close to 50 per cent from 1990-91 itself. Even the Congress(I)-ruled states have no objection to this.

On whether some of the new fertiliser and petrochemical projects will be axed:

Our emphasis will be on completing ongoing projects. Then we will have to examine at which stage various project proposals are pending. I don't rule out the possibility of certain projects getting delayed or shelved and that is simply because our resources position is none-too-bright. The way we have borrowed left, right and centre in the past has brought us to the brink of a debt trap. We have to first get out of this situation.

On the changes the prime minister wanted in the draft approach paper to the eighth plan:

He said that it was very fine to state our priorities and strategies, ideology and philosophy—still, certain figures and targets were necessary to explain where we intend going. We are now revising the approach paper to incorporate his suggestions.

tage industries and prevent large industries from encroaching on the territory of the small sector. How all these wishes will be translated into reality is not known. Still, it is apparent that attempts will be made to provide more power to state governments and local bodies to implement plan programmes. Says Planning Commission member Ela Bhatt: "Though we haven't decided on the exact modalities, we are sure about some things. First, panchayats will be given funds to execute their own schemes. Also, village level schemes cannot and will not be monitored out of Delhi.'

Which is as it should be. But what about the Government's much-publicised employment guarantee scheme? Hegde says that the amounts being talked about vary widely: from Rs 5,000 crore to Rs 8,000 crore per year. In any case, next year, the Government will spend Rs 1,500 crore more than was allocated to the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana and similar schemes this year. A formal announcement about the employment guarantee programme is expected to be made by the prime minister in March. By then a number of important developments should also have taken place.

Besides the presentation of the budget, a new approach paper on the eighth plan would have been placed before the National Development Council comprising state chief ministers. The new export-import would have been policy finalised—industry expects sharp cuts in the foreign exchange entitlements for the automotive and electronic industries. Further, the Government is expected to hike the prices of petrol (though not of diesel and kerosene).

All of which portends a period of austerity for industry. As a well-known industrialist remarks: "We expect a different kind of drought this year." But then, didn't the country survive the worst drought of the century two years ago?

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA and S.N. VASUKI MUKAND LIMITED

Full Steam Ahead

Plans to multiply turnover four times in five years

WE must regard a man who takes no part in public affairs not as a harmless but as a useless character.

WENTY three years ago, maverick industrialist Viren Shah sent 5,000 desktop placards bearing Pericles' legend to fellow industrialists and friends. At that time, many believed that Shah, chairman and managing director of the Rs 400-crore Mukand Limited, would flounder precisely because of his involvement in 'public affairs'. But they were proved wrong. After two terms as member of Parliament and a 10-month stint behind bars during the Emergency, the BJP officebearer's track record shows that politics and business can, in fact, mix very well.

Over the years, Mukand-the largest steel company in the private sector after Tata Steel-has grown from being just one of the 160-odd mini-steel plants that dot the country's industrial firmament to a market leader in the competitive field of specialised steels and alloys. And today, despite losing the race for the prestigious Rs 3,000-crore Haldia petrochemicals project to the Tatas, Mukand is going full steam ahead on its expansion schemes.

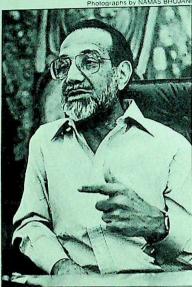
Five years ago, the company went into the red on account of labour unrest and competitive pressures. Since then, it has consolidated itself to become one of the leading engineering companies. Now it is poised for rapid growth and diversification, entailing an investment of over Rs 3.500 crore over the next five years. This will increase the company's annual turnover by Rs 1,500 crore.

Shah denies that the group's plans have anything to do with the fact that the BJP is supporting the present Government. Sitting in his Nariman Point office, the bespectacled and bearded 63-yearold businessman avers: "Do you believe it takes only a few days to put together our expansion and diversification plans? We have worked on these for years and would have come out with them irrespective of who came to power."

The plans include:

► An integrated steel plant of one million tonnes capacity-to be later doubled-at Goa, costing Rs 3,500 crore.

► A Rs 155-crore investment in units located in Orissa producing ferrous and



Viren Shah: ambitious plans



After consolidating itself as a leading engineering company, Mukand is today poised for rapid expansion.



Rajesh Shah: stress on exports

non-ferrous metals, including cold. rolled aluminium products, aluminium foil and magnesium.

▶ Joint ventures with two Soviet com. panies to augment design engineering capabilities in mining and metallurgy.

► A second machine building plantar Silvassa. Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

A joint venture with the US subsidiary of a Swedish concern, Trelleborg, to be called Mukand Dravo Wellman, to manufacture state-of-the-art bulk material handling equipment.

It is not yet certain whether all these projects will bear fruit. But as Rajesh Shah. 39, Viren's elder son who is executive director and de facto chief executive of the company, points out: "We have to diversify and expand because the growth potential of our existing businesses is limited." He provides the example of Mukand's steel plant in Thane district: "There is no scope for physically expanding this unit. The only way we can improve its performance is by increasing energy efficiency and by adding more value to finished products.'

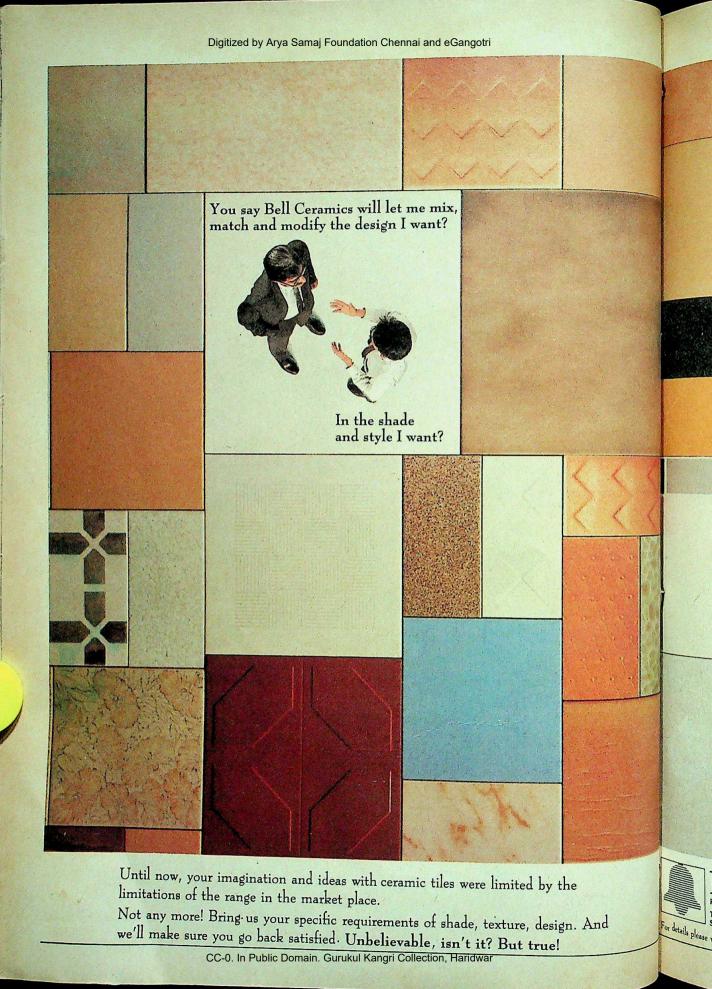
Of the projects, the integrated steel plant at Goa is by far the biggest and the most controversial. It will imply a major shift in policy, for the Government has not allowed any integrated steel plant which is not export-oriented to come up in the private sector, after Tata Steel.

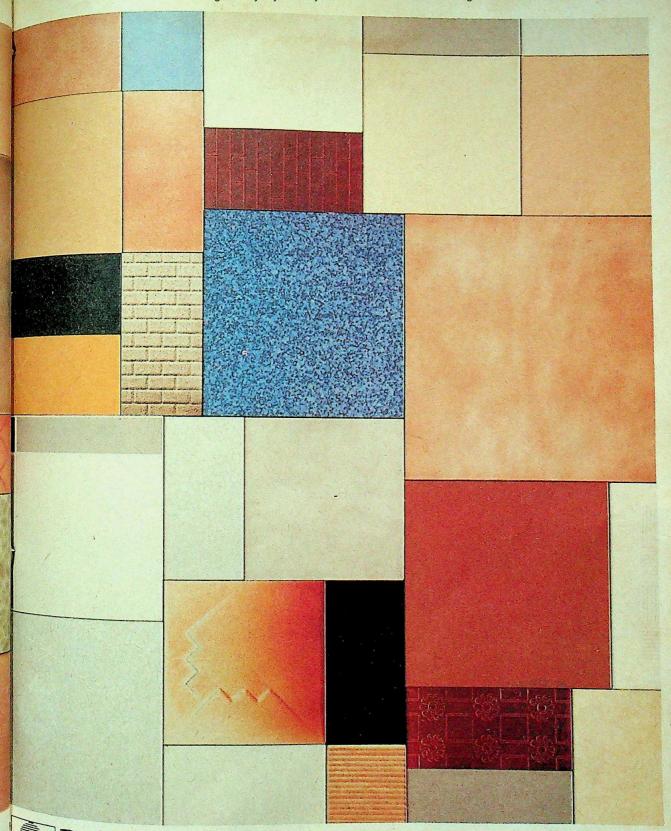
Even if the policy change does not come through, there is no doubt that Mukand-which was set up 53 years ago jointly by the fathers of Shah and Ramakrishna Bajaj, Jeewanlal Motichand Shah and Jamnalal Bajaj-hasa bright future. One reason for the optimism is that the third generation of entrepreneurs has smoothly moved to the helm of the company. Today, the key positions are held by the two Shah brothers, Rajesh and Sukumar and Bajaj's youngest son, Niraj, all of whom have studied at Harvard, Rajesh, who was elected to Mukand's board of directors in July last year, started his career in the company at the bottom: as a sales manager in 1977. The younger generation agrees that if Mukand is to prosper. it has to lay stress on stepping up exports and improving industrial relations.

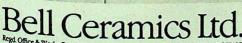
Says Executive Director Niraj Bajaji "Exports have been given a tremendous boost in the last few years and we are trying very hard to meet our customers expectations." Mukand's exports have jumped from Rs 5 crore in 1987-88 to Rs 19 crore the following year. This year's target has been set at Rs 40 crore.

Mukand's managers have clearly sel their sights on the 21st century -SHIV TANEJA beyond.

Golden moments. McDowell moments ing cold. luminium oviet comngineering etallurgy. ng plant at laveli. US subsidelleborg, to ellman, to bulk mateer all these as Rajesh o is execufexecutive We have to cause the sting busithe examin Thane physically ly way we e is by ind by adding icts." rated steel est and the oly a major nment has steel plant to come up ata Steel. e does not doubt that p 53 years Shah and nlal Motiajaj—hasa or the optineration of moved to lay, the key two Shah umar and all of whom ajesh, who ird of direcnis careerin : as a sales Unmistakality No.1... McDowell's ger generato prosper. upexports lations. Niraj Bajaj: remendous and we are customers ports have 1987-88 to year. This Rs 40 crore e clearly set entury and HIV TANEJA THE SODA WITH SPIRIT





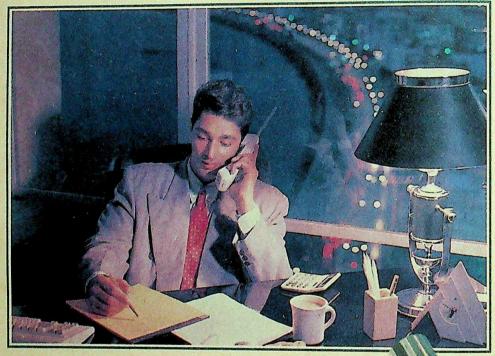


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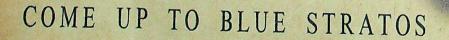
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-T'sthelongestrunning corporate battle the country has ever wit-

nessed. And it shows no signs of letting up. The armoury includes political manoeuvring, big bucks, media exposures

and even murder threats. The contenders: Dhirubhai Ambani, chairman, Reliance Industries and Nusli Wadia, who heads Bombay Dyeing.

Between 1987 and 1989, the Indian Express had gone hammer-and-tongs at Reliance. However, over the last month, Reliance took the lead through a series of

articles in the Patriot claiming that the V.P. Singh Government was going out of its way to help Bombay Dyeing. Though the Patriot goofed onceit got the Chemicals and Petrochemicals Secretary Manohar Singh Gill's name wrong in a headline-clearly, the roles had been reversed.

The latest round in the battlepertains to a naphtha derivative called paraxylene used to manufacture di-methyl terephthalate (DMT) and purified terephthalic acid (PTA). These are used to make synthetic fibres and varn. The users of paraxylene. besides Reliance and Bombay Dyeing, are two

public sector organisations, Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd (IPCL) and Bongaigaon Refineries and Petrochemicals Ltd (BRPL). But only Bombay Dyeing depends on imports.

Last year, the Rajiv government allowed Bombay Dyeing to import about 30,000 tonnes of the material through IPCL. Since Wadia wanted more than 40,000 tonnes imported, the previous government made Bombay Dyeing buy the balance from Reliance at what Wadia claims were highly inflated prices. The trouble started early this year when Wadia began lobbying for the import of a fresh consignment of paraxylene and for reduction in customs duties. Reliance and IPCL claimed that they would be having surplus paraxylene from this year which could be sold to Bombay Dyeing.

Reliance contended that its rival should not be allowed to import since it was willing to supply the material required—at prices equal to the landed cost of imported paraxylene—from its

RELIANCE—BOMBAY DYEING

Corporate Clash

The two rivals now battle over paraxylene

Patalganga plant situated across the road from Bombay Dyeing's DMT factory.

Up to end-January, the Government believed that Bombay Dyeing would need around 1,200 tonnes of imported paraxylene for March-from April, paraxylene will be available in Indiaported material.

Predictably, Reliance and IPCL screamed murder. But Gill did not give in. Five days later he asked IPCL to import the "last" consignment of 4,000 tonnes of paraxylene val-

ued at around \$1.5 million (Rs 2.6 crore) for Bombay Dyeing. The landed price of the imported material is around Rs 12,500 a tonne against the domestic price of Rs 22,000 charged by Reliance industries. Bombay Dyeing will be saving some Rs 3 crore.

The domestic price of paraxylene is

another bone of contention between the two companies. In March last vear, the Finance Ministry's Cost Accounting Branch (CAB) was asked to study the cost structure of paraxylene. Its report, submitted in late-January, raised Wadia's hackles. It stated that the domestic cost of production of paraxylene was much higher than what had been reported in a 1988 report of the Bureau of Industrial Costs Prices (BICP). This meant that if the CAB's views were accepted by the Government, Bombay Dyeing may have to pay more for paraxylene.

Gill then asked the BICP to update its 1988 report. He says he will attempt to reconcile the updated BICP report with the CAB report and present a new report before a group of secretaries in early-March to fix the domestic price of paraxylene. The group will also suggest a long-term import duty regime for the material. "I want to place the battle between the two Bombay giants behind us and concentrate on development," says Gill. (Wadia and the Ambanis did not wish to comment on the subject.)

But Gill may not succeed in his endeavour. For his recent decisionbased on the can's findings-to ask Reliance to slash its PTA prices from Rs 32,000 a tonne to Rs 24,500 has been severely criticised by the company, Reliance has reluctantly agreed to reduce its PTA prices. Curiously, both Bombay Dyeing and Reliance are complaining about the same CAB report but for different reasons. Clearly, this is not the last round in the corporate clash between India's best-known business rivals.

-S.N. VASUKI with P. GUHA THAKURTA



Nusli Wadia: putting up a tough fight

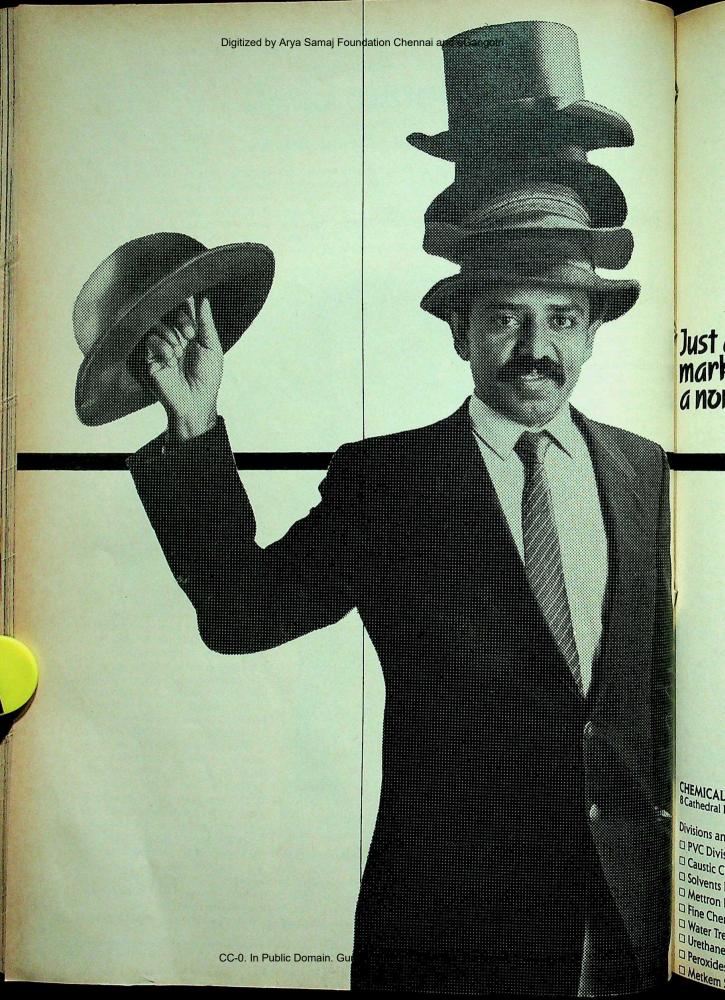






Manohar Singh Gill

since its plant would be shut down for maintenance for three weeks that month. However, at a meeting held on February 5. Bombay Dyeing said that it would not shut down its plant in March and would need 7,000 tonnes of im-



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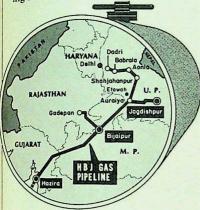
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HECTIC lobbying is on to extend the different trunks of the 1,700-km-long Hazira-Bijaipur-Jagdishpur oil and gas pipeline to key constituencies so that new fertiliser plants can be set up there. The previous government had wanted the capacities of the fertiliser plants which have come up along the pipeline at Aonla, Guna and Jagdishpur to be doubled in the next five years. The logic: it is less expensive to expand existing plants than to establish new ones costing Rs 750 crore each.



Now the grapevine has it that only Aonla's capacity may be doubled. The authorities, it seems, want two new plants to come up instead of doubling the capacities of the old ones. Expanding Jagdishpur is out; it's in Rajiv Gandhi's constituency. Instead, the pipeline could be drawn from the bifurcation point at Auraiya to nearby Etawah, which has elected Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav.

And since the pipeline is already at Dadri near Delhi, Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal is keen to extend it to Haryana. There's one snag. Nobody knows where the money is going to come from.

A Piquant Situation

THE Enforcement Directorate, Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA), today finds itself in a piquant situation. It is rather keen on reviewing its earlier decision absolving Ajitabh Bachchan of charges that he had violated the laws of the land while purchasing a Rs 45-lakh flat at Montreaux, near Geneva in Switzerland. But the directorate's hands are tled. Reason: there is no FERA board to which the directorate can appeal against a past order.

In August 1988, the then special director of enforcement Krishan Kant held that Bachchan was a non-resident Indian (NRI) at the time he acquired the flat in Montreaux. But there was considerable talk at the time questioning the propriety of the action. Reason: Bachchan is supposed to have been granted NRI status with retrospective effect from April 1, 1986, just three days before the Swiss flat was registered in his name. And adding to the doubts that the decision was not exactly above board, Kant was given a cushy post in London which was widely perceived as a 'reward' for his contribution in absolving Bachchan.

The directorate now holds that Kant erred in his interpretation of FERA and Reserve Bank rules and wants to appeal against his decision to the FERA board. Therein lies the snag. The tenure of the former chairman of the board, N.C. Gupta, had been extended last year by the Law Ministry, but he quit his job after the new Government came to power. The only other board member, K.P. Sarojini, has also left. In other words, there's no FERA board at present to which the Enforcement Directorate can appeal for a review of Kant's order.

Frozen Funds

A grand sum of Rs 75 crore has been frozen for some time now in the form of 1.5 lakh unused electronic voting machines which are currently cluttering the godowns of two public sector organisations: Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL), Bangalore, and Electronics Corporation of India Ltd (ECIL), Hyderabad. The loss to the exchequer is actually higher, for the amount—divided equally between the two corporations-excludes interest dues. A way out is unlikely because the Government and the Election Commission of India are still undecided about whether and when these machines should be used.

In preparation for the recent Lok Sabha polls, the Election Commission had placed the order for electronic machines, expecting to use them in a sizeable number of constituencies. But opposition parties refused to allow the machines to be used, fearing that they could be pre-programmed to yield results favourable to the ruling party. The machines seemed destined to rust away.

But the situation is not really all that bleak. Reason: the governments of at least three countries-Malaysia, Bangladesh and Pakistan-have made in-

quiries with the commission about these voting machines in the hope of eventually purchasing them. A suggestion: since some east European countries are likely to go to the polls in the near future, the Election Commission could ask BEL and ECIL to try hawking their wares in that part of the world.

Searching for Protection

THE incident on September 18 last year in which a number of income tax officials were severely assaulted during a raid on industrialists and merchants at Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, has cast its long shadow on the tax department's search and seizure operations this year. The incident was followed by widespread agitations by income tax officials who refused to conduct further raids unless adequate protection was provided to them.

The result: between April and end-January this fiscal year, the number of searches declined to 2,830 from 6,272 in the corresponding period of the previous year. The value of assets seized also slumped from Rs 123.44 crore to Rs 86.60 crore in this period (see chart). Chart by B.K. SHARMA

INCOME TAX SEARCHES AND SEIZURES: Rs. ON THE DECLINE 145 ASSETS 8,464 NO. OF SEARCHES '88 '89 190

Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate recently wrote to the chief ministers of all states requesting them to ensure that adequate policemen are deployed during income tax raids. Now Central Board of Direct Taxes Chairman T.N. Pandey has hit upon another idea: he has approached the Central Reserve Police Force to provide 'personal protection' to tax sleuths. And if the solution works out, then hopefully, tax raids won't turn out to be as taxing as the one at Muzaffarnagar.

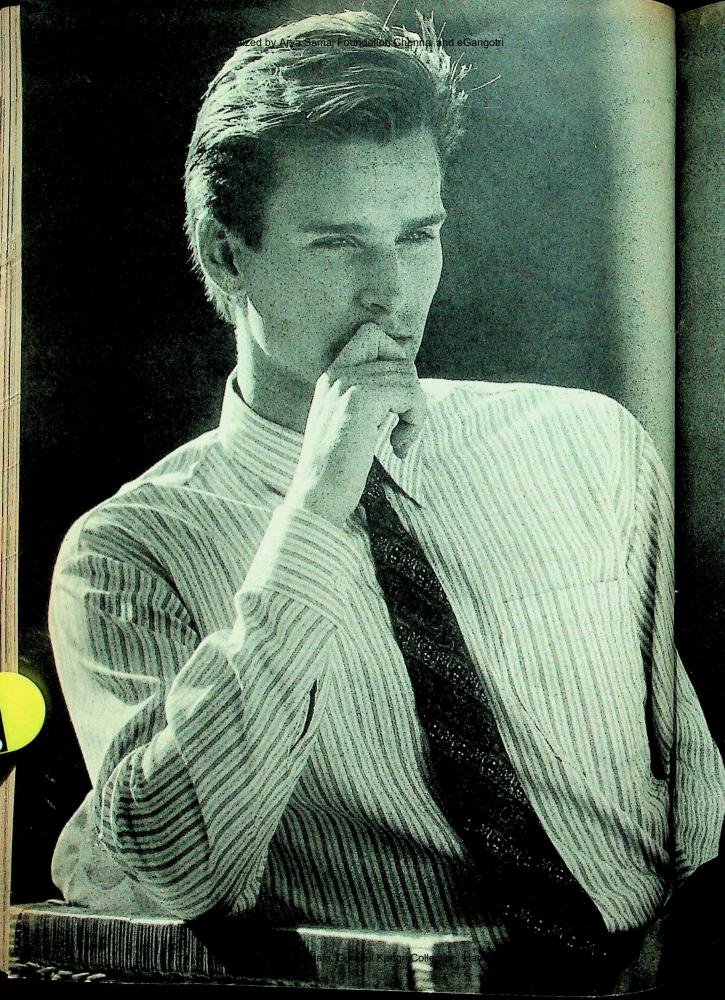
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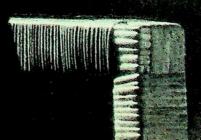
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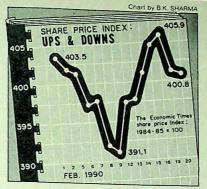
After a brief rally, a fall

FTER the country's capital markets went through a phase of deep depression in the first half of February, the heads of the different stock exchanges got together and urged Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate to ask the financial institutions to do their bit to prevent share values from plunging further. Dandavate did the needful and after a period of abstinence the institutions got into the act. Nevertheless, the stockmarkets continued to display a considerable degree of nervousness. Equity prices fell after rallying for a brief period.

The Economic Times' all-India share index rose from a low of 391.1 on February 9 to 405.9 a week later. And the 100-scrip national index of the Bombay Stock Exchange went up from 369.95 to 384.94 in this period. But the buoyancy was short-lived. Three days later, on February 19, the markets were down again (see chart).

Obviously, the 'controlled' institutional support was inadequate to signifi-

** Spot delivery



cantly beef up the mood of the markets. Also, given the brow-beating that the institutions have recently received from the finance minister for allegedly acting in an "irresponsible" manner and for "playing the market" for speculative gains, they were rather reserved, to say the least.

The tide could have been turned with a couple of categorical statements from the Government about its economic policies and fiscal proposals. Even with the budget round the corner, a few comforting hints-leave alone definite assurances-could have gone a long way in dispelling the uncertainty. But that was not to be.

Not surprisingly, the market refused

to be moved by the token efforts made by the institutions to shore up share values. Equally predictable was the fact that last fortnight saw negligible purchases for the purpose of investment, although speculators did make occasional forays into selected scrips like Associated Cement and TELCO. The Associated Cement share looked up as the company pruned itself of deadwood and disposed its redundant cement plants. And despite the traumatic experience with labour unrest at its Pune unit, TELCO has reported much better profits leading to a rise in its share price.

But if speculators were buying, they were also selling. The scrip of Century Spinning took a beating and closed the fortnight at Rs 2,640, down by Rs 60. NOCIL too declined by Rs 10 during the fortnight, what with the proposed expansion of the company's Thane plant still hanging fire. The shares of both Reliance and Larsen & Toubro showed no signs of revival.

At a time when the watch-phrase was wait and see, share values continued to drift in an aimless sort of way. Whether this can be attributed to traditional pre-budget blues is a moot question. Perhaps next fortnight's performance will provide an indication.

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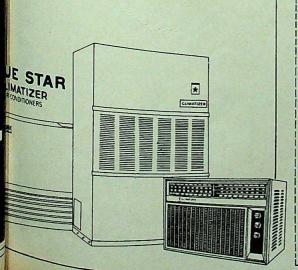
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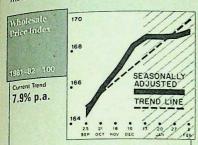
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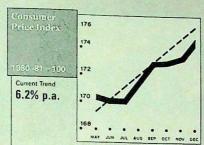
THE ECONOMY MONITOR Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

Inflation shows definite signs of slowing down—though consumer prices are still increasing at a rate of around 9 per cent. While the policy of very tight monetary and increasing and helps keep prices in check, it may have been a bit overdone last credit counts of control of relative the fortuight after a long period of relative the fortuit of the for fortnight after a long period of relative stagnation—and contrasted sharply with the drop in share prices.

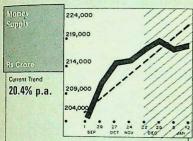
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



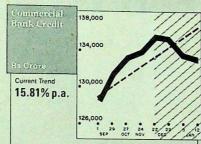
Inflation was under control last fortnight. The rate of increase in wholesale prices slowed down to an annualised rate of 5 per cent.



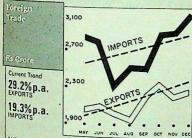
The annualised rate of increase in consumer prices during the past month hit double digit



The rate of growth of money supply in the economy declined-keeping a tight control on inflationary forces.



Tight credit conditions ruled the market last fortnight, resulting in a cut-back in the total

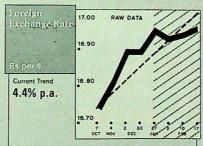


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575/

While the country's imports showed a marginal rate of growth, exports stagnated during the course of the past month.



After remaining steady for a brief period of a few weeks, the rupee was again devalued against the US dollar.

Moong 3.93 Silk Raw 3.47 Rape & Mustard Seeds2.62 Jute Textile Machinery......1.95 Turmeric......1.94 Milk......1.61 Cigarettes 1.54 Cotton Raw 1.54 Maize

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of January 1990

Mustard Oilcake 5.86

Handloom & Powerloom Products 5.57

Oranges....

% Growth

Fish......0.43 Board 0.39 Nylon/Terene and Mixedcloth......0.27 Cotton Yarn......0.21 Transformers0.20 Cotton Cloth0.20 Steel Structurals 0.00

Of the 136 series considered, 43 of them with a

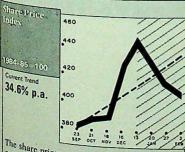
total weight of 36.835 had a positive growth and

29 of them with a total weight of 21.974 had a

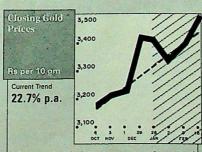
negative growth.

Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics0.70

Linseed Oil......0.70



The share prices again registered a sharp fall, Possibly a case of the markets suffering from pre-budger in



After months of relative stagnation, the price of gold registered a sharp increase during the last fortnight.

SELECTED INDICATORS	
Coal 1990	1989
Thousand Tonnes, January 20240	2008
Saleable Steel	
Thousand Tonnes, January851.6	814.6
Cement	
Thousand Tonnes, January4075	4024
Petroleum Crude	
Thousand Tonnes, January2929	2761
Petroleum Refinery Products	
Thousand Tonnes, January4520	4619

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- * Low tax liability on account of various fiscal benefits
- Wide acceptance in export markets in USSR, Bahrain and Iraq
- * Set for a major break through in exports - tie-up with M/s. J.
 Milom of UK for export of plywood and value added products to UK
- * Substantial benefits on merger of Art Plywood Industries Ltd:
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- * Interest: 14%
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- * Capital Appreciation: Conversion at a premium of only Rs.7. Market price Rs.40 (as on 2nd February, 1990 at Calcutta Stock Exchange)
- * Listing: Guwahati, Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi Stock Exchanges

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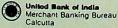
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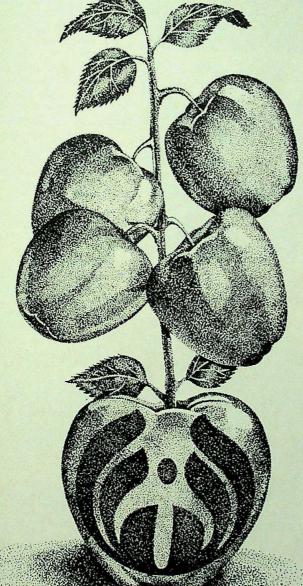
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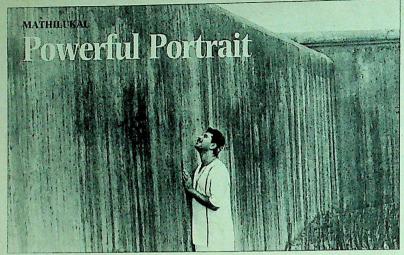
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DOOR Gopalakrishan, the internationally celebrated film maker from Kerala, has done it again. This time it is Mathilukal (Walls) which is all set to make waves with its haunting frames and dialogues. At one level, the film about an imprisoned writer and his obsession with a female prisoner across the tall prison wall is almost lyrical and simple, and on the other disturbing and complex.

Like Kodiyettam (The Ascent). Mukhamukham (Face to Face), Elippathayam (Rat Trap) and Anantaram (Monologue). Mathilukal also deals with the intricacies of the human mind caught in the pincer of painful reality. But with Mathilukal for the first time, he has adapted a novelette of the same name by Vaikom Muhammed Basheer, 82, a celebrated writer.

Basheer wrote the book in the early '40s while imprisoned at Trivandrum Central Jail by the British for sedition. Adoor read it around 30 years ago and remembers being enthralled. Recently, he read it all over again and found that it had not lost its appeal. Says he: "What interested me was a probe into the writer's mind and not just a romantic episode in the story. By studying Basheer, the script evolved."

Before writing the script Adoor read all the available works of Basheer which were autobiographical in character and took a year to write the script.

He wanted his protagonist to think-not look-like the writer. The other challenge was breathing life into the character of Narayani, a female



Mammootty (top) in Mathilukal; and Adoor on location: new heights

prisoner who is only heard-never seen-from across the wall. But so complete is Adoor's mastery of the craft, that a mere voice brings across the complex, highly strung character of Narayani.

Mammootty, the number one star of Malayalam films, who plays Basheer, comes up with his best performance ever. This is the kind of role he was searching for ever since he played a smaller part in Adoor's Anantaram. It is obvious that like his director, Mammootty had done his homework. Basheer comes across as an intense and committed individual, cherishing the small pleasures of life and living through harsh reality with mixed feelings.

Basheer believes he has been unfairly confined for writing about freedom and oppression by the British. Despite all the light hearted banter, he is sliding into a world of his own. His body is incarcerated by prison walls 20 ft tall, but his mind and spirit soar above it.

Suddenly, Basheer's life takes a dramatic turn. He hears a sensuous female voice from the women's ward across the

wall. What starts as a mild flirtation becomes an intense relationship, though neither has seen the other. It give Basheer's life a new meaning, a new direction. Everyday he waits for a twigte be flung over the wall—a sign that Narayani had come again for a rende. vous. In this manner, life in jail become more meaningful than the outside world

Suddenly, Basheer is told by the ja authorities that he is a free man. Isth. outside world not another prison. wonders. Freedom does not have the same meaning for Basheer.

The film is interspersed with humas ous quips typical of Adoor films. While Adoor is understandably pleased with the result, Doordarshan too has some thing to be proud of: it financed the filwhich will be released commercial before being screened on the nation network. Few could have imagined the the union of the offbeat Adoor and; government-controlled network would produce a work of such mastery.

-RAMESH MENON

FORM IV (See Rule 8)

FORM IV (Se	CI	uie o)
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Dated: 1st March, 1990

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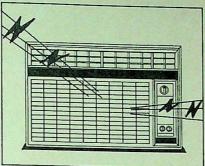
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7TH WORLD CUP HOCKEY

Sudden Death

India performs miserably

OR Indian hockey, the 7th World Cup staged in Lahore was to be a sudden death play-off: triumph or perish. No effort was spared to put together a team that looked fighting fit and brimming with skill. In the event, however, the stadia of Lahore turned out to be the graveyard of Indian hockey.

The team presented a picture of weary veterans in a battlefield. The presence of gun-toting security guards only reinforced the image. In its league outings, India was unable to win a single match, even losing twice to unfancied Argentina.

India finished at the bottom of their pool and often looked the most beatable team in the tournament. Its only victory was against lowly Canada in the play-off for the bottom rankings and the team finally ended up 10th out of the 12

In international terms, the implications for India are dismal. For one, it disqualifies the team from playing in the Champions Cup to be held in Australia in November, Worse, it will have to win the Asian Games title at Beijing-a remote possibility-to be eligible to play in the next Olympics. Alternatively, it will have to be among the top six teams in the Olympic qualifying tournament scheduled for mid-1991.

For a team which once dominated the international hockey scene, the regular scratching for remains is indicative of serious problems, more psychological than of individual skill. On at least three occasions, the Indians built up a lead and then threw the game away.

The Indian training and strategy clearly lags behind the rest of the major hockey-playing nations. What the Lahore experience showed was that the decisive factor has become the presence of penalty corner specialists like Floris Bovelander of Holland. Pakistan's triumphant resurgence and its scintillating entry into the finals was stopped dead in its tracks by the two goals scored by Bovelander off penalty corner hits. Pargat Singh, India's main penalty corner taker had no clue of what he was expected to do, often fumbling with the ball in confused hesitancy. The non-Asian teams have obviously realised that converting penalty corners is what wins matches in today's brand of hockey where the difference between the top five



■ India playing USSR in the league round: a depressing decline

India seems to have consigned itself to the sidelines of international hockey by finishing 10th out of 12 placings.

or six teams is now wafer-thin.

But India was lacking in other departments as well. "The Indians centre from the wings when the circle is crowded. Their forwards lack the finish and at best are able to force penalty corners," said Horst Wein who had helped mould the Spanish team. According to former Indian skipper Somayya. the defenders were intercepting the ball too deep in their own half and "resorted to long passes, a sphere in which non-Asian teams were superior".

Even Pargat, who had sounded confident before the World Cup, felt that everything had gone wrong. "We came overtrained, tired and lacking the zeal and gusto so vital during a world class tournament in which there is just a shade of difference in the teams." he told INDIA TODAY. The team had been shunted from one camp to another for nine months. And just before it left for Lahore the players formed an association, refused to accept the "substandard kit" and demanded more than the "measly daily allowance" of \$10 per player. So, as a senior player put it: "We came to Lahore a demoralised lot."

If the demoralised Indian team did a repeat of their last World Cup showing, Pakistan displayed amazing tactics and resilience to heave themselves out of the 10th placing in London to finish in

second place, beaten by the powerful Dutch team in the final. Like India. Pakistan's conversion rate of penalty corners was low-against England they converted just one out of 14—they made good by the brilliance of their left flankers Vice-Captain Shahbaz Ahmed and Wasim Feroze. Few teams could withstand for long the Pakistan forward line which kept coming back like waves.

What Lahore showed was that the Europeans have almost taken over the game, having over the years subtly WISTAR changed rules to suit their style. "New rules confused everybody, including the umpires. And the interpretations and logic varied from one match to another. said Horst Wein. Former Pakistan Olympian Ghulam Rasool Chaudhury was unsparing: "The umpires are given unlimited power, which they exercise wrongly." According to Arshad Chaudhury who played two World Cups and two Olympics for Pakistan, Asian representatives are dumb spectators at FIH meetings. "At this rate it is only a matter of time before the Asian countries areou of the reckoning," he said.

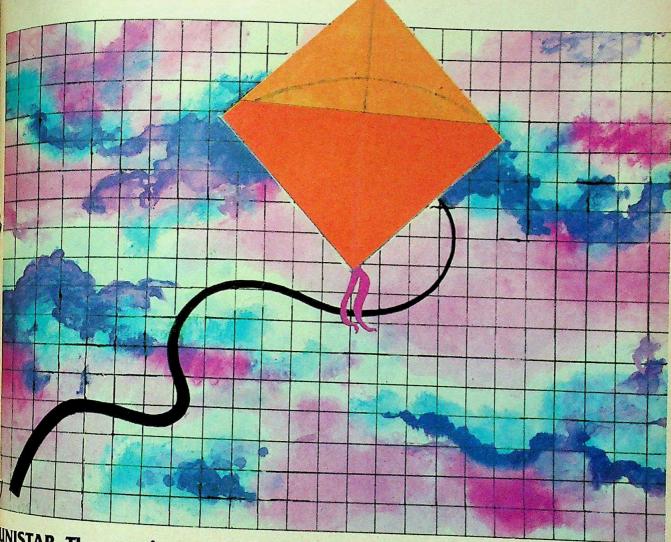
Looking at Pakistan's performance that might be an exaggeration. But India certainly appears to have consigned itself to the sidelines of international hockey.

—KANWAR SANDHU in Lahor

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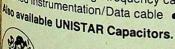
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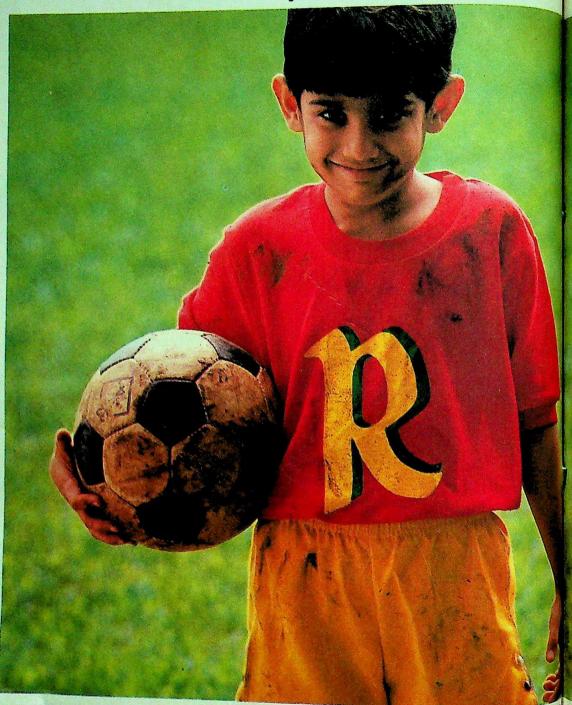
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Harsh Dev, football terror of the under-tens, is a striker of

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league football.
When not running circles around hapless half-backs, Harsh may be seen at the occasional party zapping the opposition in in-on-g pants tallored from that other smash hit, Raymond's Pantalonia Pantaloni.

You don't have to be a

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Raymond's

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Ne Ratum Enterprises, 386, T.K. Mohire, S.S. II. KOLHAPURI: Shivaji Mak, Bayasheve Metal Corporation - G.R. Shah, Sheikari Sahakari Sangh kut, Berati Sop No. 1.0 MALEGAON; Camp Road, N. Joshi Pvt. Ltd., Garaver Bulding O MAGPUR. Gokupter, Sahe Appencies, West High Carleau Hant, Bandeai Mohomadali, Bhandara Road - Jaggannith beharat, Gestanis Steel Centre - Mahal, Steel House, Opp. Tula: Putla - Satar, Apapanal, Gokhari Marg. Sitabuldi, M.S. Pande & Sons, Near rever Suser Popular Agencies, Main Road - Santosh Traders, Fekadi Red DMSKI: Bhandl Bazar, Prakash Ramdas Kale, 848 - Shivaji Road, 1981 Isang Conpany, Salmare Bulding I O SMANARA DI: Bhagwan Maker Peh, Bedmutha Sons, Princamiti II. PANDHARPURI: Hickindrus, Gapray, Salmare Bulding I O SMANARA DI: Bhagwan Maker Peh, Bedmutha Sons, Princamiti II. PANDHARPURI: Hickindrus, Gapray, Salmare Bulding I O SMANARA DI: Bhagwan Maker Peh, Bedmutha Sons, Princamiti III. PANDHARPURI: Hickindrus, Gapray, Salmare Bulding I O SMANARA DI: Bhagwan Maker Peh, Bedmutha Sons, Princamiti III. PANDHARPURI: Hickindrus, Gapray Traders, 2894, Pushpanjal III. PARATHWADA: Satr Baux, Rachha General Siones III. PUNE: Bohri Masjid Bulliding, Jain Maker Peh, Bedmutha Sons, Princamar Peh - Vane Road, Jain Molals, 39/24 B. Mandals, B.C. Mehla Sons, Princamar Peh - Vane Road, Jain Molals, 39/24 B. Mandals, B.C. Mehla Say, (11), Shukarar Pen I SARGUI. Herbaht road, Bhagate Steel Centre, Nashara Sende Sard Sonaré Sand Comer I SATARA, Mol I Chowk, Ghinaj Sanas Shee Certor I SHRIRAMPURI: Main Road, Nivruti Dhondu Dinya ao Sons I SOLAPURI: Navi Peth, Steel Centre, &Janara Shopping Gapra Shoel Centre Sand I Washi Sector I SATARA; Mol I Chowk, Ghinaj Sanas Shee Certor I SHRIRAMPURI: Main Road, Nivruti Dhondu Dinya ao Sons I SOLAPURI: Navi Peth, Steel Centre, &Janara Shopping Gapra Sheel Centre, Alfarara Estate II. THAME: Naupada, Matsa Sand I Washi Sector I SATARA; Mall Chowk, Sonas Sand Comer Davi Park, Steel Centre, &Janara Shopping Gapra Sheel Centre, Alfarara Estate II. THAME: Naupada, Matsa Sa

ANDHRA PRADESH

ASSAM

ad Rin Pradah Anard & Co — DHUBRI: D. D. Road, G.C., Roy & Sons

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GALPARA - Dhork Baza, Brothers - Janata Road, Radio Mart

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□ ARARIA: Ganesh Stores □ ARRAH: Chowk, Agrawal Bartan Bhandar Jali Road, Bhola Electricals □ AURANGABAD: Old G.T. Road, Pearl & Co. Sangeeta □ BARAIH: Station Road, Snha & Co. □ BEGUSARAI: Sho,
No.1, K.M. Market, Bhar Commercial Agency, Main Road - Main Road, Deo
Brothers - Kwalify Steel Agency □ BETTIAH: Lai Bezar, Sagar
BHAGALPH: D.N. Singh Road, Dokana & Sons - Light Centre - Mela
Stores □ BIHAR SHARIF: Anila Market, Jain & Brothers □ BOKARO STEEL
CITY: City Centre, M.s. Amragad), Sector-4, M.S. Bombay Variety Stores, E-13
- Main Road, M.S. Shital Stores - Shreelakhi Bartan Bhandar, Bedi Market
□ CHAIBASA: Jain Market, Jagarval Stores - Mis, Dhirajal C. Thakkar Sadar Bazar, K.C. Paul & Brothers - M.S. Steel Centre, Near Kali Mandir
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CHANDIGARH
Sector 15D: Indian Crockery House, Shop No 45 • Sector 17E, Jagat Singh & Sons., SCF 32.

Ashok Vihar, Usha Crockeries, 31, Central Market, Basement - Babu Market, Punjab Bartan Store, Sarojin Nagar - Connaught Place, Janki Dass & Co., 23-F Super Bazar, Main Branch - Chandanl Chowk, Baskhi Ware House, 1851 - Bhagwan Dass Jagananth, 633, Opp. Kucha Natwan - Budh Singh & Sons, 1854 - Babui, 1960, Opp. Bank of India - Fatehpurl, Ladit Parshad Bansi Dhar, 256, Opp. Kucha Ghasi Ram - Ram Kishore Electricals, 234 - Gandhi Nagar, Mts. Bhupinder Singh & Sons, Main Bazar - Laux Khas, Jam Botohers, Haux Khas Market - Kalka Ji, Dass Electronics, Main Road - Karol Bagh, Anand Crockery Stores, 157, Galfar Market - Bengal Pottenies & Alled Store, 6:00-31, Ajmal Khan Road - Sargodha Bartan Store, 2567, Ajmal Khan Road - Tamilinadu Stores, 6:68, Basement Padam Singh Road - Vishal Bartan Store, 2568, Ajmal Khan Road - Kamin Bangar, Crockery Emporium, 11-F- Kotla Mubarakpur, Rajasthan Hardware Store, H-482, Subhash Market - Lalpat Nagar, National Bartan Bhandar, 34, Central Market - Dawar Utensis, 33, Central Market - Moult Nagar, Bhutani Bartan Store, Main Bazar - Rajourl Garden, New Yariety Stores, 1-58, Main Market - Sadar Bazar, Bharat Crockery House, 6:117, Main Market - Bin (Shore), 19-Punjab Crockery House, 2744, Qutub Road - Sarojini Nagar, Ms. Vandana, 93 - Shahdara, Aggarwal Bartaan Store, Babarpur Road - Subzi Mand Ghantaghar, Crockery A Bide Stores, 1535, Chandrawal Road - Trinagar, Jain Electronics, 1532, Tola Ram Bazar - Vusuf Saral, Jain Utensis, 15, Mandr Vall Gali - Lami Household Emporium, 74/2 - Muni Lal Bishan Swarup, 72/6 - Ramkishan & Sons, 72/7.

GOA

CI MAPUSA: Near Maruthi Temple, Happy Home, 2-Shiv Sagar Apartment Ramachandra Building, Mayur Agencies, No.17 CI MARGAO: Jaideep
Apartment, Suprabath Electricals, 3A, Pasorpion - New Market, Dianath D.
Sadekar and Sons, PBax No.331 - Opp, Cine Lata, The Bombay Metal Mart Opp, Municipal Building, T.D. Parodkar and Co., Post Box No.65 - Opp,
Municipal Garden, A.P. Lotikar and Sons, Shop No.8 - Station Road, T.A.
Hazare and Sons CI PANJIM: 18th June Road, Wadki Enterprises, Opp.
Saraswatt Mandir - Dr. Pissurhekar Road, MSB Caculo, Post Box No.68 Opp, Hotel Vistar, Abdellabhai Laijee and Co. CI VASCO DA GAMA: Duredo
Building, Barkat Ali Traders.

GUJARAT

GUARAT

CI AHMEDABAD: Three Gates, Ms. Akbarally Kadarbhai and Co., 1822 - Ms. Bombay Novelty Stores, 1839rt I SURAT: Baranpurt, Ms. Kansara Thakordas Nagindras Mod. Bhagat - Bundelwad, Ms. Shah Thakordas Jovannan, Bhagat, Char Rasta Ci VADODARA: Jubilee Begh, Ms. Happy Home, Shahmar Chambers - M.G. Roed, Ms. Popatial Krishnalal Kansara, Opp. Jain Tempa.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

☐ BILASPUR: Near Bus Stand, Jiwan Ram Ved Paul, Committee Shop No.5☐ NAGROTA BHAGWAN, NIChia Bazar, Dharam Paul & Sons.

JAMMU & KASHMIR

□ ANANTNAG: Rishi Bazar, Abdul Ghari Nboh, Hussain □ JAMMU: Jain Bazar, Delure Utensits Store - Kanak Mandi, Tarachand Kapurchand Jain - Raghunath Bazar, Ladrumal Des Raj Jain, New Market □ SRINAGAR, Slik Factory Road, J

KARNATAKA

BANGALORE: Brigade Road, Pots and Pans, 11, Curzon Compiex Chickpet, Raja Trading Co., 802, Chickpet, Near Balepet Square - Rashmi
Steets, 3-40, Chickpet - Vinod Stainless Steel House, Opp. Vijayalasischmi
Tailes - Jayanager, Anupama Electric Co., 41 Block - Indrar Metal Mart, 85,
4th Block - K.H. Road, V.G. Paneerdas - Malleswaram, Chandrashekara
Electronics, No. 1721, 5th Cross, Opp. Geethanjail Theatre - Nagarathpet,
Salecha Steel Centre, 8551, Nagarpet, Main Road - Richards Square,
Adams & Co., 19 - Sudhama Nagar, Master Marketing Agency, 13,
Anniparam Main Road - Yeshwanthpur, Ravi Agencies, 900, 8th Cross, K.N.
Estension D BELGAUH: Maruft Galli, Revankar Electricals - Udaya Vastu
Bhandar, 1536 O CHIKMAGALUR: Ratingfir Road, Muktl Enterprises, P.B.
No. 8 D GULBARGA: Chamber Complex, United Household Trading Co.,
Modern Gas Shopping Centre D HASSAN: Dass Complex, Novelly House,
Sampage Road, Branch K.R. Puram - Bus Staind Road, Mangalore Metals
Maru C HUBL! Broeway, Porval Steets, 63 - Station Road, Bharat Watch Sampage Road, Branch K.R. Puram - Blus Stand Road, Mangalore Metals Man | HUBLI: Browery, Porval Steels, 63 - Station Road, Bharat Watch Co. | MANGALORE: Balamatta, Somayaji Electronics, Collectors Gate - K.S. Rao Road, Super Supplies, Gokul Market - Vishwa Sales, Woodside Buiking - Milagres Centre, Souza Sales Centre, Fernandes Buikling - MIlagres Centre, Souza Sales Centre, Fernandes Buikling | MYSORE: Sayaji Rao Road, Mohan Bhandar Kamadhenu | SHIMOGA: BH. Road, Selvel Traders Pvt. Ltd. - Basaveswars Market, Ganesh Traders No. 2, Basavasadana - Nehru Road, Sadhana Trading Co. | SIRSI: C.P. Bazar, Jayashree Electric House | UDIPI: K.M. Marg, Harsha (Prakash Electric)

KERALA

KERALA

ALLEPPEY: Mullackal, Bhima Stanless Steel & Steel Industries

D ALWAYE: Catholic Centre, Wireless Metro - Lourde Centre, C.C.
Mahappan & Co. D ANGAMALY, Highway Junction, Sterfing Steel Palace

D CALICUT: Muthalakulam, Bright Metals (Service Centre) D CANANNORE:
Camp Bazar, Stalnless Steel Centre (Service Centre) D CANANNORE:
Camp Bazar, Stalnless Steel Centre (Service Centre) - S.N. Park Road,
Grihalakshmi D CHALAKUDY: Kadicheeni Complex, Harisree T.V. & Home
Appliances - Pellissery Buildings, Sini Vessels D ERNAKULAM: Broadway,
Anthony Francis & Son - Life Styles, KT.D.C. Shopping Complex - Opp. Town
Hall, A.F. Metal Man, Bannejee Road U KOUDGALLORE: North Nada,
Nirmal Ladies Fashion D KORATTY: Main Road, Associated Dealers

D MAHE: Main Road, Karma Enterprises (Service Centre) - Sreelekh
Agencies - Opp. Sub Court, Reesha Agencies D PALGHAT: G.B. Road,
Steel Palace (Service Centre) D FERINTHALMANNA: Bus Stand Building,
Janata T.V. Engineers D PERUMBAVOOR: Near New Private Bus Stand,
Mokada Agencies - P.P. Road O TELLICHERRY: Logans Road, Sreenivas
Electronic Company (Service Centre) D THOOUPUZHA: Market Road, J&P
Metals D TRICHUR: Geo Buildings, Haneel Traders, P.O. Road - High
Road, A.D. Kuntapans Sons - P.O. Road, Steelalayam - Round South, Kerala
Leather Co. (Service Centre) D TRIPUNITHURA: East Fort Gate, Maria Steel
House D TRIVANDRUM: Chalal, S. Ibrahim & Company, Ibrahim Buildings.

MADHYA PRADESH

MADHYA PRADESH

□ BALAGHAT: Main Road, Ramdeo Peer Metal □ BETUL: Ganj, Balmukund Gupta - Kothi Bazar, Anuja Traders - Goodwill Agencies □ BHILAI: Circular Market, Gargi General Stores, Shop B-15-16, Camp-2 - Sector-6, Gift House, A. Market □ BHOPAL: 19 New Market, Animesh Traders, 19, Prakash Market, Cargi General Stores, Shop 6-15-16, Camp-2-Section-6, cliri House, A. Market D BHOPAL: 19 New Market, Animesh Traders, 19, Prakash Bhawan D CHHATARPUR: Mahal Road, Agrasen Emporium - Choice Centre CHHINDWARA; Statlen Road, Mayur, Char Phatak D DABRA; Kamila Market, Adhunik Kitchenware D DAMOH: Clnema Road, Ajanta Traders D GADARWARA; Jahanda Chowk, Mangal Kalash D GWALJOR: Sarrafa Bazar, Dhomraj Hazarila! - Topl Bazar, Pahocram Pesuram D INDORE; Jawahar Mang, Cooker House, Shop No.370 - Pamilaxman Bazar, N.R. Electronics, Shop No. 23 O JABALPUR: Ashirwed Market, Ashirwad Steel Emporium, Shop No. 18 - Civite Centre, Electricals & Electronicals, Shop No. 177 - Naya Bazar, Pee Kay Traders, Shop No.31 - West Chamapur, Shanti Steel Centre, Shop No. 834 O KORBA: Main Road, Ganesh Steel Emporium D MANENDRAGARH: New Sabij Mandi, Supreme Electricals, Nagar Palika Building O NARSINGHPUR: Kandell, Yjoti Bartan Bhandar, Main Road, GalPuRH: Mellys Road, Surran Sales - Sadar Bazar, M.S. Traders - Shroe Patra Bhandar, Shanti Vijay Market - Steel Emporium U REWA: Kata Mandir Road, Gupta Sales Corporation, Surya Kirat Boulding - Prakash Chowk, Prakash Agencies, Opp. Swagat Bhawara - Venikat Road, Vijay Crockery Stores O SAUGOR: Katra Bazar, Modern Stores, Katra Masjuding - Seconit Sara Pathar, Vishal Steel Centre, 2343, Bhoj Marg - Gopal Mandir, Manoj Patra Bhandar, Jawahar Marg - Patra Bazar, Light House Patra Bhandar, 125, Jawahar Marg Q WAIDHAN: Waldhan Bazar, Light

MANIPUR

IMPHAL: M.G. Avenue, Manipur Builder Store • Poana Bazar, Pasa
Enterprise • Thangal Bazar, Roopak Agency • Sudarshan's.

MIZORAM

☐ AIZWAL: Bare Bazar, B.C. Dey & Sons • Eastern Trading Agencies • National Business Enterprise.

MEGHALAYA

SHILLONG: Bawri Mansion, V.K. Ghai & Co., Dhankheti

ORISSA

ASKA: Near Bus Stand, Asoka Enterprises, Main Road © BALASORE: Cinema Bazar, Fairded Corporation - E-9, Plyover Market Complex, Prashanti Agency - Motlgang, Mexican Enterprises, Art Kabiraj Road © BARAGARH: Main Roed, Roop Sringar Agencies © BARIPADA: Seba

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Sangs Hall, Aero Voice D BERHAMPUR: Bhapur Bazar, Silla Gopalam & Sons - 13, Girl Market, Alfed Stores - Sano Bazar, Raghevendra & Co. D BHAMAH PATNA: Amir Farcy Emporum, Ganchi Chook D BHUBANESWAR: 141/142, Ashok Nagar, T. Krishna Patra - Easiern Market Bullding, Lickhand and Sons - Sahid Nagar, Sunchi D CHANDPUR! Malin Road, Gourema Electricas D CUTTACK: Choudhury Bazar, Janata General Store - Haripur Road, Manash Entarprises - Mahatab Road, Indian Industries - Tinkonia Bagicha, Shankra General Store - Sunta D DHEKKANAL: Kanchan Bazar, Jupahar D JAJPUR TOWN: Cheme Hall Road, Manada General Store, Near Durga Cinema D JASPUR! Malin Road, Janatap Stores - M.G. Road, Visanaha Tibel Contro Layland Control Contro

Centre, Shop No. 10 SAMBALPUR: Baldanath Chinak, Roddar Machinery House, Usha Kury - Gole Bazar, Bhartal Steet Centre.

PUNJAB

O AMRITSAR: Hall Bazar, Harbana Crockery Store - Raghby Singh Kataria & Sons - Katra Jalmal Singh, Popular Trading Co. - Partap Bazar, Puri Battery Store D BANGA! Azard Chowk, Jarvicek Kumar Strv Muran Co. BARNALA: Male Bazar, Ch. Pyralal O BARTALA: G.T. Road, Abro Enterprises D BHATINDA: Sadar Bazar, Madan LB Baburam, Main Chowk - Hobel Bazar, Bomby Sizel & Crockery House - Gandhi Market, Kanchan Crockery House - Subnash & Co. D FAZILKA: Main Bazar, Indian Bazar, Hall Baburam, Main Chowk - Hobel Bazar, Bomby Sizel & Crockery House, Oan Bazar, Indian Bazar, Hallash Chandar Crockery House, Part Cock Tower - Kashmild Bazar, Salandhar Road (Sanala Crockery House, Nacr Cock Tower - Kashmild Bazar, Vasishro Dass & Song O JAGRAON: Main Bazar, Kalash Chand & Sons O JALANDHAR: Baintild Gath, Bhazat Light House, Near Seema Palace - Bazar Sheikhan, Kharbanda Shopping Centre - Romash Chander Mitter Paul - Chowk Relian Bazar, Gentre - G.T. Road, J. Om Prakash & Sons, Opp. Crid Hooptal - Naya Bazar, Bombay Stanfess Seel (Repd.), Near Misp Chowk Ol-Halman Bazar, Gentre - Romash Chander Mitter Paul - Chowk Relian Bazar, Gentre - Chan Bazar, Street Chowk Relian Street Change Control - Road Changer Chocker House - Jan Chocker Agana Chang Street Changer Changer Chocker (Sana) Chocker Agana Street Changer Chocker (Sana) Chocker Agana Street Changer Chocker (Sana) Chocker Agana Street Changer Chocker (Sana) Street (Sana) Chocker (Sana) Chocker (Sana) Street (Sana) Chocker (Sana) Chocker (Sana) Street (Sana) Chocker (Sana) Street (Sana) Chocker (Sana) Street (Sana) Chocker (Sana) Street (Sana) Chocker (Sana) Chocker (Sana) Chocker (Sana) Chocker (

Clause Read Canif. Goyal Brothers, Station Road Cl ALWAR: Hope Clause, Jartia Bartan Bhandar, Shop No 30 B HARATPUR: Noem Gate, Kishon Shyam Brijesh Kumar D GIRAMER: KER, Road, Modern Electronis and Electronis Clettinon Gate, Mayor Cheman Rap Part. Long Life Depth. Store, 372, Gal No.1 * Thypolia Bazza, Mahimor General Store, New Hayor Cheman Rap Part. Long Life Depth. Store, 372, Gal No.1 * Thypolia Bazza, Mahimor General Store, Nop No. 25 DOMPHUR: Stotion Road, Sadia Apercias.

I MYRTRINAGAR: Subhash Market, Amar Jyoti Farry Store, Shop No. 38 CI KOTA: Rappura Bazza, Babi Mal and Co. C SRI CANGANAGAR: Public Park, New Dhàwan Bartan Bhandar, 43-44-5. Wanna Daymand Mary, Hind Bartan Bhandar (Dulapure). Bapu Bazza, Shah Larmi Lial Parkash Chandra Jan, Shop No. 108 - Bhamashah Marp, Namora Taderg Co., Shop No. 132, Near Zeen Rath Chowk - Choldnia Bazzar, Ragesh Traders, Near Chemora Mandri.

Mardr.

TAMIL NADU

CHIDAMBARAM: South Car Street, Sn Vnayega Pathira Kadal, 25, South
Car Street D COMBATORE: Cress Cut Road, And Job's Corporation, 16-A Coval Steets, 48, Sn Lasking Carden, 18-B Raja Street, Supreme Plastic Rodgers - Sni Mangalam Shee House, 910 Raja Street, Supreme Plastic Rodgers - Sni Asingalam Shee House, 910 Raja Street, Supreme Plastic Rodgers - Sni Mangalam Shee House, 910 Raja Street, Supreme Plastic Rodgers - Sni Mangalam Shee House, 910 Raja Street, Sathya Moorth Ellie Bazar, S.M.B. Manickam Nader, 162 Bashyagarah Road D DNDRUGH Big Bazar, S.M.B. Manickam Nader, 162 Madhavakirishna Street, Universal Traders, 32 - Netal Street, Vasantha
Malgai, 190 L'ARAIKUDI: Piro Campa, General Agencies, 7, Veerapa
Nalayam C MADRAS: Kilpauck Garden, Mummy Daddy, 227 - Netylapore,
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South Avani Moola Street - East Gate, Anantha Metal Company (Firm), 43-A,

Kamarajar Salai - S. Cheliah Nadar & Sons, 267, Kamarajaratai - Neer Central Cinema, Mummy Daddy, 59, West Tower Street - Nethaji Road, MuthuseM Corporation, 109 D PATTUKOTTAI, Neer Clock Tower, Sri Raam, Furniture, 19, Thalayari Street D PONDICHERIPY: Kandan & Company, 22, Jawahariai Nehru Street D SALEM: Bazzar Street, National Agencies, 348 - V. Chandrasekaram & Sons, 357 - V. Chandrasekaram & Con, 361 D THEN!: Opp. Pandian Lodge, Gri Traders, 299, Subban Chetty St. D TIRUNELVELI: Junction, S. Santhosha Nadar & Son, 37; High Road D TIRUPPURI Kwitha Agencies, 135, Eswaran Roti St. D TRICHY: Near Malaid Yasal, Eversilver Maligai, 36, NSB Road - Mangai Melaid Mart, 24/2, NSB Road - Prema Eversilver Palaio, 41, NSB Road D VELLORE'- Annad Agencies, 478, Main Bazaar - Opp. CMC Hospital, Seeru Agencies, 80A Arcot Road.

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DARAMBAG: Neer Girls School, New Ramkrishna Basanalaya, Arambag. Hooghty DASANSOL: Bastif Bazar, Saha Sised House, 19, Leighton Street - Eagle Glass House, 103, G.T. Road - Ghanty Furniture House, 361, G.T. Road - Probhat Radio Excercis, G.T. Road - DAHOK NAGAR: Gol Bazar (Main Gate), Recuks Stores D BAINCHI: Ballnoft Raligate, Sonariari, Hooghty D BALURGHAT: Chewrangee, Hemanta Stores

DBALLY: Bally Bazar, Anapuma Stores, 4/1 Iswar Dey Lane

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Baida High School, Raj Lami Stores, P.O. Belda DBERHAMPORE:

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(Opp. Sree Cinema) • Bidhan Sarani (Town School), Modern Mater 137 · National Variety, 137, Bidhan Sarani · National Variety Stations - Brabourne Road, Crockery Emponum, 42/43, Armenian Street - Clean Street, Lamp House Pvt. Lid., 23 · Chandrid Chawk, Street - Clean Street, Lamp House Pvt. Lid., 23 · Chandrid Chawk, Street - Clean Street, Dariet Bross. B-41/42. College Street Market - Deshyparin Reveal Sarakar and Co., 55, R.B. Avenue - Dharmatola, Italian Street in Nepal Sarakar and Co., 55, R.B. Avenue - Dharmatola, Italian Street in Lid., 22, Chewaragee Road - Untilong (Bidram Market), Sariety Street, Duriet Bross. B-41/42. College Street Market - Deshyparin Reveal Sarakar and Co., 55, R.B. Avenue - Dharmatola, Italian Street in Lid., 22, Chewaragee Road - Untilong (Bidram Market), Sariety Street, Amarata Market - H. Adhitts. Grand - Bross. 14/4, R.B. Maken, 17/33, Bidram Sarani - Lala Market, Street, Anamanth Kundu S. Bross. 14/2, Ph. Road - Old China Buz Street, Amarata Kong, Del. Road - Old China Buz Street, Amarata Kong, Del. Road - Old China Buz Street, Amarata Kong, Del. Amarata Kong, Del. 14 Nos. Bus Stard Rana, 350/1 D.H. Road - Opp. Padmarree Cinema, Lond Sales Emporium, P-45, Raja St. C. Mullick Road - Census, Lond Sales Emporium, P-45, Raja St. C. Mullick Road - Census, Lond Sales Emporium, P-45, Raja St. C. Mullick Road - Road, Nos. St. St. Sci. Kalvich Road - Road

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EIGHBOURS

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Tremors of Dissent

Democracy movement threatens palace

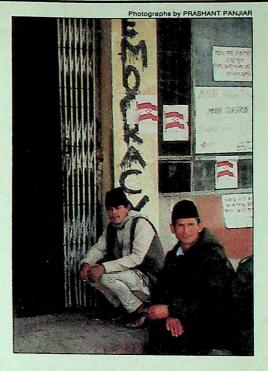
T Nepal's Pashupatinath Temple, the atmosphere was festive on Shivratri. Only this time the gowds were thinner. Reports of recurrent trouble had kept away pilgrims from India and other regions of Nepal. Butsuddenly the mood was shattered by the sound of slogans as a handful of prodemocracy demonstrators materialised from nowhere. The riot police, waiting instrength at the police station, jumped offtheir truck. Batons swung, anguished cries arose and the procession melted away as quickly as it had gathered.

By the end of last fortnight, as the Government cracked down on agitators led by the Nepali Congress-Left Front combine demanding multi-party democracy, this was to become a pattern. Senior opposition leaders were among the 2,000-odd arrested. With the Jana Mukti Andolan (People's Liberation Movement) entering a bitter phase, it daimed at least 11 lives according to official figures. Unofficial figures put the

toll at 30. Though the protests lacked a coordinated plan, they displayed a popular involvement not seen in past phases of the three-decade-long Nepali Congress movement.

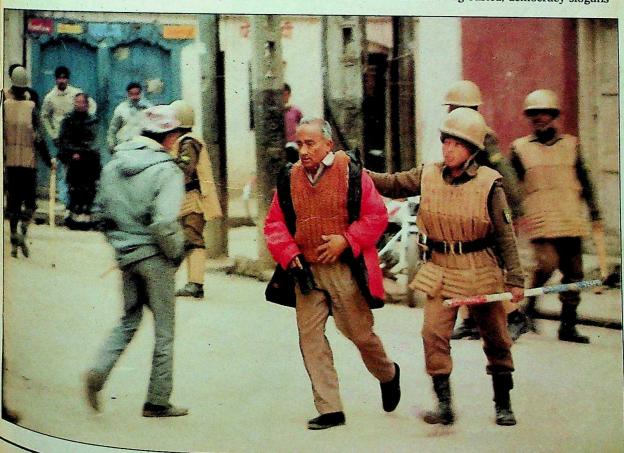
This time round, the agitation has acquired an added edge as the Nepali Congress and the seven-party Left Front have ioined hands. "This is a decisive and final stage of our movement to throw away the yokes of slavery," says Nepali Congress supreme leader Ganesh Mansingh (see interview) who was among the first to be put under house arrest by the Government.

The Government revealed desperation as the police resorted to firing at demonstrators. As things seemed to go out of hand in the leftist strongholds of Chitwan and Bhaktapur, the army was called out. But the



he Government concedes it has never faced a greater challenge.

Protesters being ousted; democracy slogans



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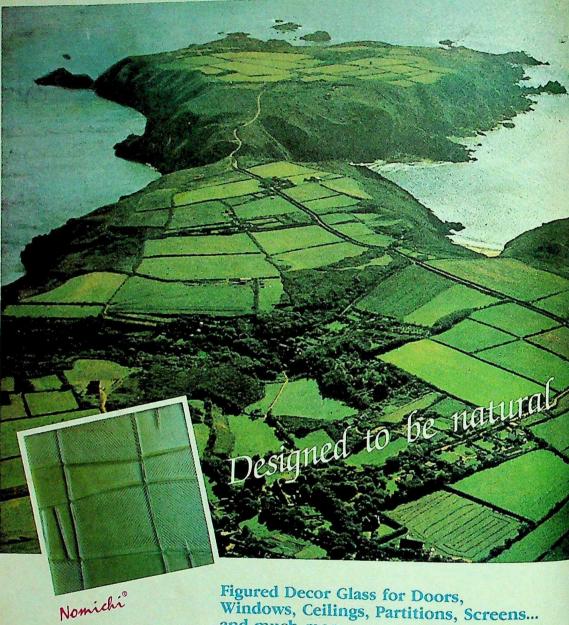
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EIGHBOURS

protests showed no signs of dyprotesta 'No amount of represdon will make us go back," said D. Banstola, a medical student. "Things are changing all overthis planet. But the problem with our king is that he does not think Nepal is part of this planet," says Debendra Raj Pandey, 50, former finance secrelary and an activist of the Human Rights Organisation of Nepal, which has documented gores of cases of torture by the police. The Government, on the other hand, asserts it has to use force to counter the 'extre-mist movement'. Government spokesmen say the movement's leadership has been taken over by the militant left, popularly referred to as Ma-Les (Marxists-Leninists). "A compromise with extremists is not possible," says Kamal Thapa, 38, minister of state for communication. But he concedes the stir's popular underpinnings. "There is unhappiness, particularly on the conomic front. These people are

trying to capitalise on that," he

says. Like many other pancha-

yat supporters, Thapa asserts

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennal and eGangotri China NEPAL Nepal Palpa Bhaktapur Parasi Chitwan U. P. DEMONSTRATIONS IN FAVOUR OF Bihar MULTI- PARTY INDIA DEMOCRACY

he agitation for multi-party democracy now has an added edge as the Nepali Congress and the sevenparty Left Front have joined hands.

Doctors of Teaching Hospital on strike

that it is best for Nepal to have a system entirely its own to keep its distinct identity.

The palace has also drawn comfort from Indian statements. Observers noted how the palace went out of the way to take the sting out of Rajiv Gandhi's criticism that India's new envoy Lt-General (retd) S.K. Sinha had been made to wait for two weeks before the king accepted his credentials. Sinha landed on February 21, several days after Rajiv made the charge, and presented credentials within 24 hours at Pokhara where the king has been camping these days. "This is the first time ever in the history of monarchy that a king has accepted an envoy's credentials outside Kathmandu," said a senior official. Sinha was also accorded a rare 40-minute one-toone audience with the king.

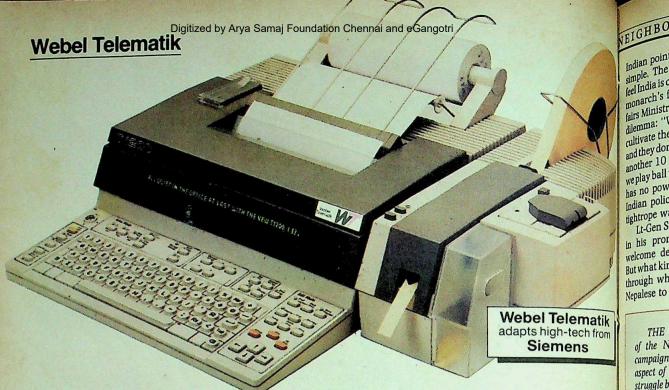
The palace is looking forward to an early agreement with India which would ease the economic situation, bringing down prices. This situation is believed to be the major cause of the unrest.

Yet the situation from the



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being giv too long Indian point of view is far from smple. The democratic groups supposed in the feel India is casting its vote in the monarch's favour. External Affairs Ministry officials admit the illemma: "What happens if we cultivate the democratic groups and they don't come to power for another 10 years? And what if weplay ball with the king and he has no power after 10 years?" Indian policy thus has to be a tightrope walk.

Lt-Gen S.K. Sinha is guarded in his pronouncements: "We welcome democracy in Nepal. But what kind of democracy and through what means is for the Nepalese to decide.'

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THE remarkable resilience of the Nepali pro-democracy campaigners is a lesser known aspect of the three-decade long struggle between the monarchy and the Nepali Congress. While the banned party's three major surviving leaders are old and rendered chronically sick from incarceration, yet they are as enthusiastic as youngsters about their cause. Ganesh Mansingh, 75, supreme leader of the Nepali Congress, is the most prominent among them. Placed under house arrest last fortnight, he spoke clan-

Q. Is this the final stage of your movement?

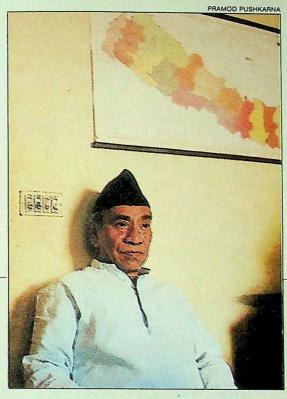
destinely to Features Editor

SHEKHAR GUPTA. Excerpts:

A. In politics nothing is final. But after 30 years, we are now close to our goal. Our people have been subjected to torture beyond human endurance. If they are still fighting, the goal cannot be far.

Q. Why have you been critical of India's attitude to your stir?

A. We agree that it is not possible for India to distance itself totally from a government in Nepal. The problem is India has done nothing for us. Yet we have always been called its stooges. It is the king who has been an Indian stooge. Look at the concessions made to India whenever the palace has been under pressure domestically. Think of 1950 and think of the concessions being given now. Don't forget that not too long ago a king himself took



GANESH MANSINGH

"We will not accept the king as leader"



Mansingh's guarded home

shelter in India while we came back in 1977 at the risk of losing our lives.

Q. What do you want India to do?

A. We want moral support. In the past, because of the global cold war many nations kept their principles in hibernation. Now these nations should bring these principles out. This king could not become an absolute monarch without India's support.

Q. What kind of system do you want now?

The palace is discomfitted by the fact that the West does not see much justification for the monarchy's hold on power. Last fortnight, the US State Department censured Nepal for human rights abuses. The official reaction in Nepal was restrained: "We understand the US concerns. We are using minimum force." Further, a group of US Congressmen, including Stephen Solarz, former ambassador to India Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Edward Kennedy have written a joint letter to the king seeking a negotiated settlement to the crisis.

Said Thapa: "What worries

A. The king can stay as a constitutional monarch. In our system no leader would try to become king and we will not accept the king as the leader. If he tries to stay as leader, there will be total anarchy. He must accept the winds of change blowing through the whole world.

Q. But the palace says they've done what the people wanted by installing the panchayat democracy?

> A. The panchayat system has no face to talk to us. If the people were not with us, do you think they would defy a monarch of such powers despite 30 years of repression? Not even his father, not even Prithvi Narayan Shah and not even Jangbahadur had such total power. where even a bird cannot flutter its wings without the king's sanction.

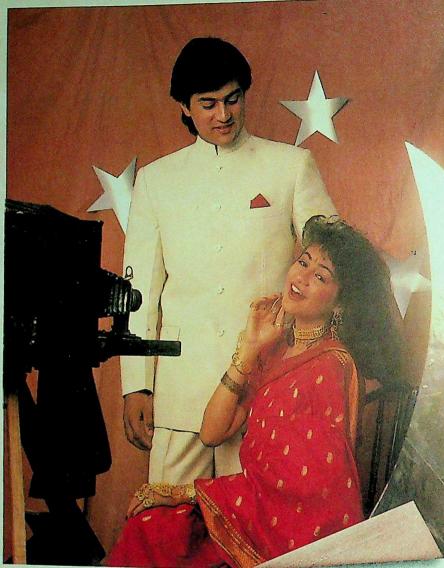
Q. Are you questioning the king's ability to

run the country?

A. What is his competence? You know the competence every dictator needs—the ability to keep the military under his thumb. It is a question of knowing a few tricks. I remember a Sanskrit shloka: if you just have power in your hands you will be immediately called erudite, brave, able, everything.

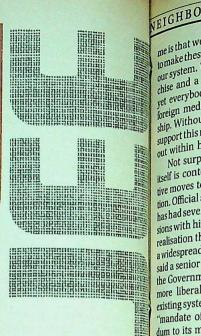
Q. When do you expect your current incarceration to be over?

A. This is a whimsical and callous administration. They can do anything any moment. How can one predict?



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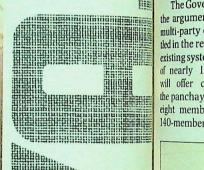
The Fabric of Life



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me is that we have not been able tomake these people understand our system. We have adult franchise and a free judiciary. And yet everybody, particularly the foreign media, calls it dictatorship. Without the foreign media support this movement will fizzle out within hours."

Not surprisingly, the palace iself is contemplating substantive moves to contain the situation. Official sources say the king hashadseveral rounds of discussions with his advisers. "There is realisation this time that there is a widespread desire for change," said a senior official hinting that the Government would bring in more liberalisation within the existing system by stretching the "mandate of the 1980 referendum to its maximum".

The Government will stick to the argument that the issue of multi-party democracy was settled in the referendum when the existing system won by a margin of nearly 10 per cent. So it will offer concessions within the panchayat system. Twenty-eight members of the present 140-member partyless pan-

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"Without foreign media support the movement will fizzle out."

KAMAL THAPA, Minister of State for Communication

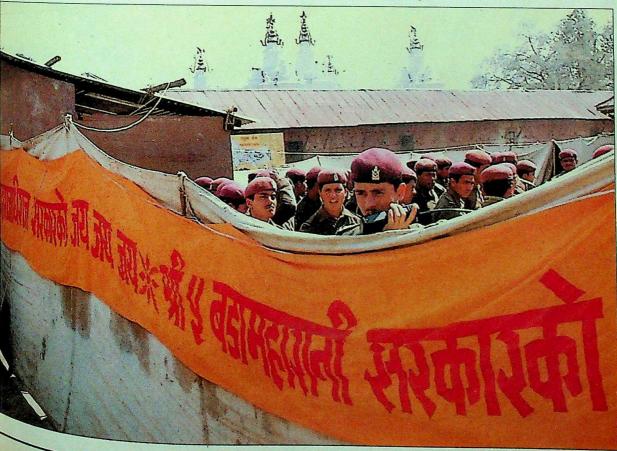
Police and pro-palace banner at Pashupatinath Temple

chayat are nominated by the king and the others are elected once in five years by adult franchise.

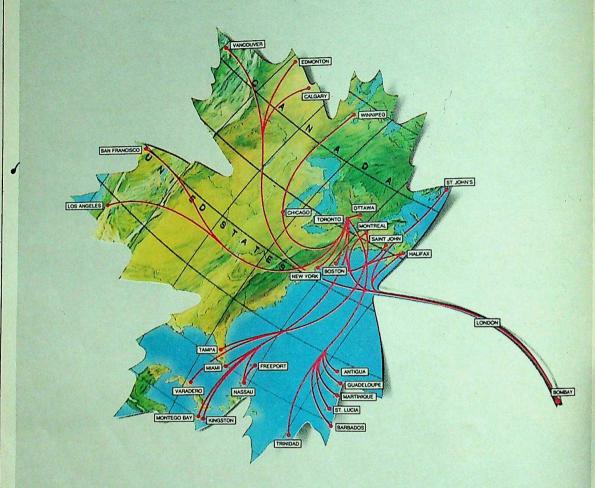
The palace would be happy to make finally the concessions it promised in 1980. These include a proper implementation of the third constitutional amendment which envisaged a prime minister elected by the panchayat and answerable to the panchayat and not the palace. This could be accompanied by advancing the panchayat election originally scheduled for May 1991. This could cause confusion in the opposition ranks with large factions of the Nepali Congress and the Left likely to want to participate. Also, this could bring the multi-party campaigners and the panchayat government in direct confrontation, keeping the palace out of it.

Evidently, the tactical battle would centre on the palace's strategy of distancing itself from the clash and the pro-democracy groups' effort to keep the guns trained at the monarchy which is facing its toughest threat now.

-SHEKHAR GUPTA in Kathmandu



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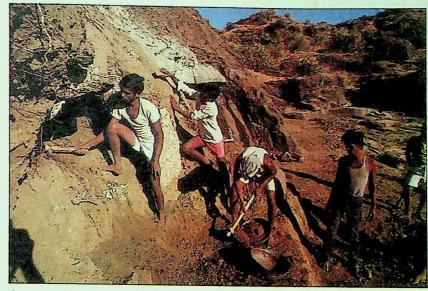
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A Rare Find

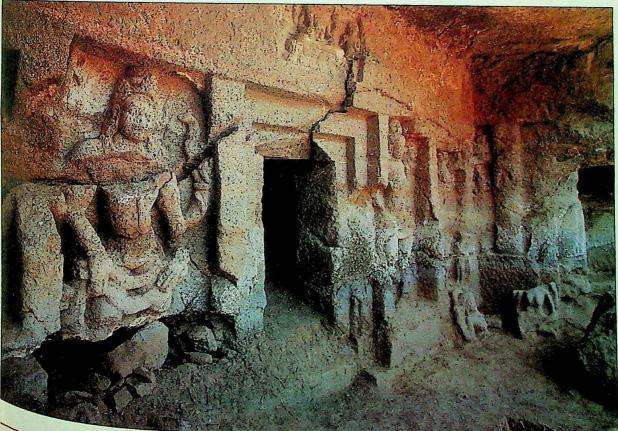
New Shaivite temples from the medieval period discovered

Tis an area where few tourists venture. For many years now, the upper reaches of the hills which contain the magnificent Ellora rock-cut temples and monasteries have been the refuge of owherds, sadhus and adventurous adolescents from nearby Aurangabad. But since January, the Ellora hilltop has been invaded by groups of labourers, carefully digging for half-buried, cacti-covered caves. And now the Archaeological Surrey of India (ASI) has announced the discovery of 28 new rock-cut caves in the area, containing Hindu sculptures of the medieval period ranging from about the 9th century to the 13th century A.D.

Given the scale and splendour of the main Hindu, Buddhist and Jain caves of Ellora, the unearthing of the new cave temples-many of which are like small monastic cells-may not be regarded as asignificant addition to the heritage of acient Indian art. But their proximity



Excavation work being carried out at the newly discovered site

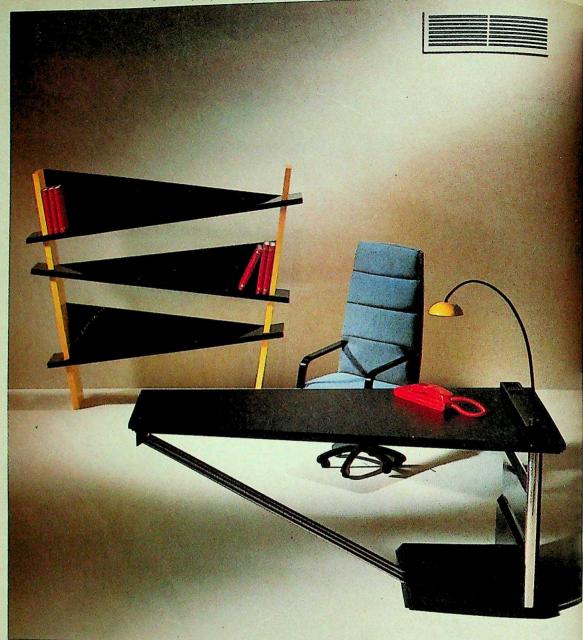


A rare sculpture of a large dwarpal (guardian) at the mouth of a cave

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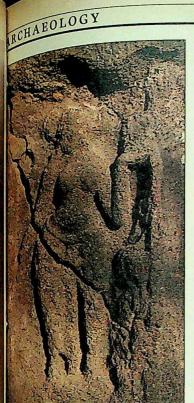
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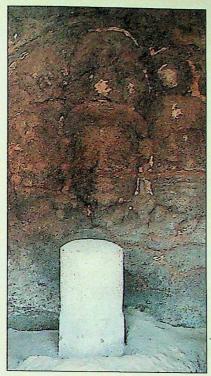
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A sculpture of Ganga on a crocodile; the new three-headed Maheshamurti; and Yamuna on her tortoise

whe world-famous Ellora caves invests them with a special significance.

Thenew caves are a short trek up the 圖from Ellora's glorious Kailas Temple. Ithe Kailas Temple, carved from a single rock, is an example of the richness and gandeur of Shaivite art, the little cave temples on the summit reveal some of the magic and mystery associated with the cult of Shiva.

The new caves are found in three clusters around picturesque pools crealed by streams flowing into the Velurganga river. According to local legend, Shiva created the river by striking the black basalt rock of the Ellora hills with his trident to provide water to a thirsty Parvati, It is the same wondrous Shiva, the form of the three-headed Maheshamurti—the creator, preserver anddestroyer—who emerges again and again from the black basalt rock of the dark, tiny cave temples.

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India's most celebrated Maheshaourtisto be found at Elephanta, an 18 ft high colossus at the end of a large, pillarhed hall. In the new Ellora caves, Maheshamurti appears in miniature, a the cell a the cell dominated by a Shivalinga. In the Elephanta Maheshamurti, the feabures are finely chiselled, the face has a tanscendental transparency. In the new Ellora caves, though Maheshanurti's lips are as full and sensuous, the face has a rougher, earthy quality.

And the low-roofed sanctums are just big enough for a sculptor and his assistant to chisel away.

THE low-roofed caves, the crude sculptures and the indications of Pallava and Chalukya influences in the sculptural forms could even indicate that some of these caves were training grounds for sculptors working on the Ellora caves (which were carved mainly between the 6th and 8th centuries A.D.)," observes archaeologist P.N. Kamble, leader of the team busy unearthing the caves. This would mean that the new caves belong to an earlier period than the 9th century. Kamble believes there are still more caves lying buried on the hillside both at Ellora and at Banoti, 60 km north of Ajanta, where he has also found a group of four Buddhist caves dating from the 4th to 6th centuries A.D. The ASI Director-General, J.P. Joshi, however, hasn't yet visited the caves, and the authenticity of the find is still to be fully established.

"Many of the caves are part of the legend of local villages, where elders talk of the abode of spirits in the hills. But they believe it brings bad luck to talk about them, and that whenever a group of men have gone inside, one has not made it back," says Kamble. Adds he: "The western region is rich in rock-cut caves and we hope to keep digging for more."

According to Kamble, the new Ellora

caves have yielded at least two rare sculptures. One is of Parvati chiselled next to the large dwarpal (guardian) at the mouth of a cave—Shiva's consort is shown with the naugraha (nine planets). a constellation which gained significance in the tantric cult. The other sculpture is a half obliterated one of Shiva as the supreme yogi, seated on a lotus flower and flanked by flying apsaras. And next to the cave bearing these sculptures may be a large hall still buried under tonnes of earth and rock.

The figure of Parvati under a canopy of nine planets is not to be seen in the main Ellora caves, but many of the other rock-cut sculptures are similar in both the old and the new temples-Yamuna on her tortoise, Ganga on a crocodile, Ganesha, the seven mother goddesses flanked by Veerbhadra and Ganesha. Most of the sculptures, though, have been ravaged by time.

The ones that have survived the best in the new Ellora caves are those of Maheshamurti. In one cave, even the vegetable colours applied on the mudand-lime plaster still remain-a hint of red and green, the black and white patterned headgear of the deity, his right hand holding a rosary, a coconut in the left. In the reflected sunlight from the pool, Shiva emerges from the dark rock, primeval and timeless, indisputably the Lord of the Universe.

-M. RAHMAN in Aurangabad

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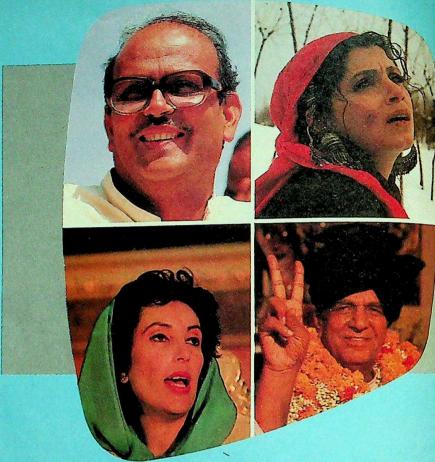
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Domain. Gurukul Kangri The newsmagazine to watch

R.K. Lax



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R.K. Laxman's serial evokes instant empathy



HOW many times have you arrived late at the office because the maid is late? How many times have you climbed the attic to look for a screwdriver and ended up

finding everything else and making a mess in the process?

On Monday nights, a growing number of viewers are glued to televisions, watching a lifestyle that mirrors theirs. At last, in Wagle Ki Duniya, there's a serial in which the characters arenotheroes. They are people. Like you and me. Like R.K. Laxman's common man who observes everything, says

This is not coincidental: for Wagle is another creation of Laxman, who has chronicled India with unerring, subtle humour for over 40 years, becoming part of our collective consciousness. Even more coincidental is that the actor who plays Wagle, Anjan Srivastava, leads a life remarkably similar to Sriniwas Wagle's. Like his alter ego, he lives in a middle class co-operative society building in Bombay and has a job with Allahabad Bank. Like Wagle, he has two sons.

And that is precisely what earns his

performance instant audience empathy. Admits Srivastava: "I live in a co-operative society with all its daily problems like water and electricity and maid servants. I even have a piece of land somewhere which I don't know how to trace." But more than that is the use he makes of his urban condition to breathe realistic life into the character of Wagle. " People have been able to relate to it because they can identify with the character. Wagle's story is their own story."

Wagle is not his first role (he has had bit roles in Intezaar and Manoranjan) but it is certainly his best. And he has high praise for Laxman: "He is quite a man. He described Wagle to me and spoke like him. And I thought, he himself would do

a great job playing Wagle." But now, with the serial back in a second avatar, it almost seems like Wagle was created for Srivastava and not the other way round.

What's surprising is that in an age of loud soap

(Below) Anjan Srivastava and Bharti Achrekar in a scene from Wagle; and (right) Laxman: realistic

operas with loaded messages or the forced humour of sit-coms, a serial like Wagle Ki Duniya, which neither pretends to carry a message nor has star appeal, can hold viewers' attention. Says Tina Khote of Durga Khote Productions, which produced the serial: " Laxman has touched a familiar chord."

What seems like its handicap is its biggest advantage. Wagle doesn't try to make you laugh. He is overburdened by the daily grind of urban life, where his small triumphs, small tragedies and small achievements engage the viewers. What's more, the language is userfriendly. Says Khote: "Laxman's Hindi is worse than mine so he would reject every word he wouldn't understand." Laxman agrees: "I've been spared having to understand Hindi, so I've insisted on simple language.'

Wagle's problems are the saga of survival in urban India: you want to repair the clock, and you want a screwdriver. And you can't find it. Says Kundan Shah who's directing seven

> episodes (Ravi Ojha is directing the other six): "Every episode was conceived like that. Laxman would visualise the situation, act it out, and we'd carry out from that point.'

The serial ends in April with a mock tribute to its medium: the television. Wagle feels left out and lonely when he returns from work only to find the wife and kids rushing off to the neighbours to find out what happened next in Lifeline. So the Wagles decide to buy a Tv. Their encounters with salesmen and Wagle's tendency to fiddle with the knobs when a popular episode is on underscore the fact that if you want to laugh, just look around you.

Laxman is understandably furious with the tyranny of 23 minutes-the time allotted per episode. Says he: "If Mahabharat can get 45 minutes, and all it does is shower arrows upon arrows, why can't Wagle get more time?" It is a question more and more admirers are beginning to ask.

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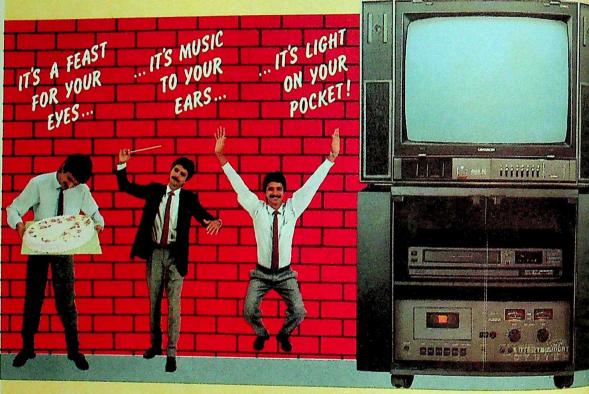
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M.F. HUSAIN Faking the Master

Art scam as Husain imitations flood the market

AKES, as the truism goes, are the ultimate tribute to a master. No wonder then that India's foremost painter, Maqbool Fida Husain—whose painting sold for a fabulous Rs 10 lakh at the Sotheby's auction last year—was the victim of a major art scam in Madras. Of the 11 canvases by Husain sold by a

leading art gallery, as many as nine turned out to be fakes.

Provoked, the 74vear-old painter issued quarter-page newspaper advertisements warning art collectors of the scam. In a handwritten appeal, Husain was forced to annouce that someone was copying his paintings and advised collectors of his work to send him colour photographs of his paintings for personal authentication.

The advertisements indicated that the problem was serious enough to warrant Husain's unusual characteristically flamboyant appeal. The fakes, purchased by a prominent art collector, were fortuitously detected by the painter's photographerson, Mustafa Husain, who lives in Madras.

Mustafa noticed that one of the canvases from

he

will now

TELEVISIONS

his father's Raj Series, Raja and Ranee, differed from the original. The Original had been sold over three years ago in Bangalore and teproduced in the glossy book on Husain's work recently published by the house of Tatas. A comparison showed up some minor but noticeable discrepancies—the pearls in the Raja's necklace were shaped differtally, the artist's signature was not in the right place and the title scrawled

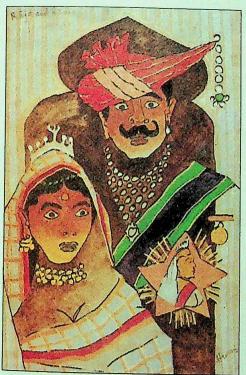
above the Raja's head was missing. The fake was obviously copied from the Tata book, but the painter ddn't get all the details right. That's what exposed it," says Husain of the lake Raja and Ranee for which the collecor reportedly paid Rs 80,000.

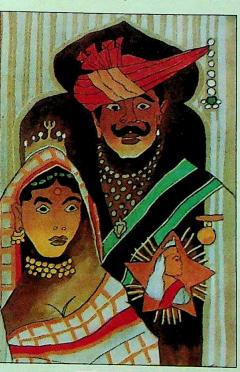
think fakes can be stopped altogether. After all, it's been going on in the West for so long. But if photographs authenticated by me are kept along with the painting, then the buyer can immediately compare and make sure that the

Husain has taken a philosophical attitude to the fakes. Says he: "I don't painting is genuine."

This is not the first time though that Husain's work has become the subject of an imitator's talents. In the early '70s, a New Delhi gallery sold a painting, ostensibly by Husain, to an American collector which turned out to be a fake. Ever since, a copy would crop up in galleries or with collectors. A painter in Hyderabad, also named Husain, gained some notoriety by not only copying the master's work, but by exhibiting it.

Now with sky-rocketing prices following the boom in the art business, neither the painters, nor the collectors, nor even the galleries, can risk the disastrous consequences of fakes flood-





ORIGINAL

You may not know that there are people copying my paintings and passing them off as originals. If you wish to be sure that any painting of mine is authentic (not a Fake) you may send two colour photographs of the work. One copy will be returned to you duly authenticated and certified along with a registration code. The second copy will be preserved in a register.

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FAKE

Husain's advertisement: fighting fraud

ing the market. "As art fetches higher prices, more crooks will be tempted. It is necessary that all senior artists sell every painting with an authenticated photo," says Kali Pundole of the Pundole Art Gallery in Bombay.

Nevertheless, the master himself appears to have resigned himself to the prospect of more fakes appearing in the market. Observes he wryly: "Picasso said that if nobody copied his work, it would mean there was something wrong with it. Until there are copies, a painter cannot believe he has arrived." Such affirmation has come in ample-if uncomfortable-measure. -M. RAHMAN



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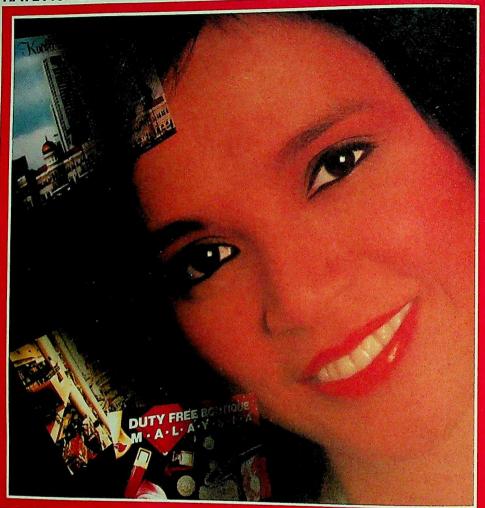
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RABINDRA BHARATI UNIVERSITY Song of Despair

Symbol of the Bengali renaissance goes to seed

Tis the ultimate paradox. Amid the boopla of the celebrations of the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of Calcutta, the state Government has been confronted with the charge of deliberately allowing one of the symbols of Bengali renaissance to wither away. Maharishi Bhavan in congested orasanko in north Calcutta looks like any one of the many decrepit buildings that make up the city's decaying landscape. As the turn of the century this building, built in 1784, built in 1784, was the symbol of the frothy effervescence of Bengal's resurgent culture. This was where Rabindranath Tagore was born and died. And where for many years Bengal's great luminaries who fermented the renaissance often gathered.

"Today this building is a national shame," says Bhabatosh Chatterjee. vice-chancellor of the Rabindra Bharati University (RBU), founded in honour of Tagore in 1962 and headquartered in Maharishi Bhavan. To focus attention on the state Government's negligence of the university, the 64-year-old Chatterjee went on an indefinite fast under the statue of Mahatma Gandhi

in Calcutta on Martyrs Day, January 30. His grievances:

▶ The state Government did not agree to create 27 teaching posts, sanctioned by the University Grants Commission.

▶ The roof of the visual arts faculty room in Maharishi Bhavan collapsed 10 months back and nothing has been done yet.

▶ The dance department has no dance floor, there is no space to house the library or even the mu-

Sum where the paintings of Rabindra-Tagore have to be preserved.

Some posts of readers and over 15

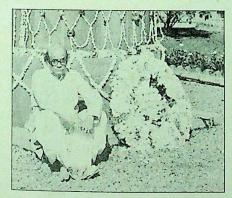
ficers have been lying vacant for years. There are no full-time teachers for the degree courses in library science and

Chatterjee withdrew the fast on the request of six other vice-chancellors who promised to take up the cause of the university university—with which most Bengalis have an emotional link—with the government. But last fortnight realising that their efforts would not make much headway, Chatterjee resigned.

"I've written thousands of letters to the state Government since I joined in December 1987 but have got no response," says Chatterjee. According to Government officials the state's relucrenovation of Maharishi Bhavan offered by French Counsel-General Xavier Dilleman recently. When the vice-chancellor wrote to the state Government for permission to accept the funds he was rebuffed. Said Chief Secretary T.C. Dutta: "There is no need for the state Government to seek foreign help to repair the damaged house of Rabindranath Tagore." He claimed that the Government had already sanctioned Rs 10 lakh three months ago and had asked the public works department to assess the damage. Says Shanu Lahiri, head of the RBU's fine arts faculty, referring to the promise of "positive steps" made last

Photographs by SAIBAL DAS







(Clockwise from top) Ruined Maharishi Bhavan; collapsed roof; and Chatterjee on fast

tance to release funds to the RBU is because of its record of misuse of funds. Some of the financial irregularities which Chatterjee himself pointed out to the chief minister, have been passed on to the detective department of the city police but nothing has happened since.

But in what seems to be a vindictive attitude-in response to Chatterjee's attempts to put an end to 'dirty politics' on the campus—the Government went out of its way to block financial aid for year by the Government: "We don't know if the Government really did anything. The university is going down and there is gloom everywhere.

The RBU which has 10,000 students on its rolls and three faculties-fine arts, visual arts and humanities-is indeed on the verge of collapse. And the vicechancellor's valiant effort to save a Bengali icon might soon be lost in the din and glitter of Calcutta's tercentenary celebrations. -FARZAND AHMED THE UNITED STATES

Domestic Despair

New group helps Indian women in distress

T about 10 p.m. when Dr Shamita Dasgupta, a lecturer in psychology at a college in New Jersey, is getting ready for bed the phone rings. It is the local hospital informing her that they have just admitted an unconscious 29-year-old Indian housewife who has been badly beaten by her husband.

For Dasgupta and her half a dozen colleagues who work for the women's Manavi, the case is assigned to a volunteer who then provides all the help providing required-ranging from much needed moral support to arranging for shelter and loans. "We constantly get threatening phone calls from the abusers. But this is part and parcel of the work and we are not intimidated by that at all," says Dasgupta.

The growing organisation has also

women are subject to some form physical or psychological abuse. problem faced by women in such ilies is only worsened by the lack of outlets: inadequate social network of proficiency in the local language, unfamiliarity with the system. "Part comes from the territory of being woman. But the close-mindedness of Indian community in the US towa any kind of family problems make worse," says Sharmila Sen.

"Fund raising is our biggest blem," says Chitra Venkatram Manavi volunteer and member of technical staff of Bell Labs. The gro operates from the house of any one the organisation members or sometime



Shamita Dasgupta; and (right) a Manavi workshop: helping hand

organisation called Manavi that they founded five years ago, such calls are becoming increasingly regular. Their aim was to create an organisation that would ensure choices for Indian women and had broad feminist goals. But soon, Manavi-registered as the New Jersey chapter of AIWA (Asian Indian Women of America)-found itself getting involved in more practical problems faced by Indian women: those battered by their husbands: those in need of legal assistance: and even those in dire financial distress.

'As soon as we came into existence we started getting calls from battered women. We weren't equipped to handle them," says Dasgupta. But in spite of such handicaps and acute shortage of funds, Manavi has already helped 72 such women.

Besides 10 workers—all highly educated professionals, including social workers, psychologists and lawyersand over 50 members, the group has eight male members, who cannot be counsellors under Manavi's policy, but who help raise funds and organise workshops, such as one they held on domestic violence last summer.

When a distress call is received by

ccording to the women's group Manavi, in about 20 25 per cent of Indian households in the US some some physical or psychological abuse of women goes on



published a resource directory listing names and addresses of all counselling agencies in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. And as word gets around, Manavi is being sought out by Indian women in despair. "I feel that being an Indian woman myself, I can best understand the need of these women," says Sharmila Sen, a Manavi counsellor and lecturer at a New Jersey college.

Among the needy women who have been rescued recently is a domestic servant who was often beaten and shut away in the basement of a New York apartment where her Bangladeshi employers were staying. Manavi helped her find another job. Another woman, Vibha, married to a highly educated Non-Resident Indian came to Manavi for help with her one-year-old daughter after she could no longer stand the cruelty that her husband regularly inflicted on her.

These are not isolated cases. Manavi findings show that in a shocking 20 to 25 per cent of Indian households in the US

from a local library.

Manavi's work has inspired founding of another organisation Sakhi, which was founded in spring year in New York, has already helped. battered women. "There's a lot of share and silence around the issue of batter women. And we are trying to aller that by active community partici tion," says Anannya Bhattacharjet founding member of Sakhi. Says Go Poore, who is associated with Man "A battered woman's struggle is no linear. It zigzags and spirals. Our jo to help the victims spiral out.

What is frightening is that the pr lem affects even the new generation Indians. Manavi has handled a coupt cases where the victims were borning US. "We must start changing socialisation patterns of raising and girls, and begin teaching out to respect themselves," says Dasgur But till then the problem seems falte -MINAL PANDYA in be spiral further.

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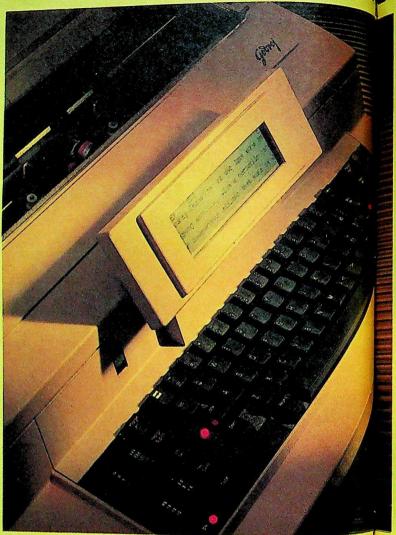


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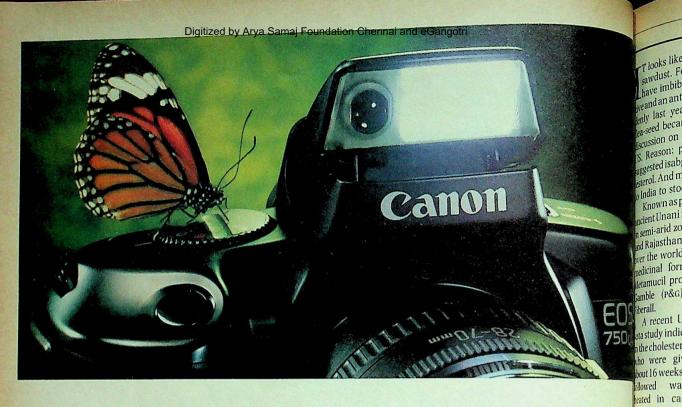
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Known as psyllium, is abgol is an uncient Unani medicine grown only nsemi-arid zones of north Gujarat and Rajasthan. The seed is used all wer the world as an ingredient in nedicinal formulations—such as letamucil produced by Procter & amble (P&G) and Ciba-Geigy's tiberall.

A recent University of Minneotastudy indicated significant dips the cholesterol levels of 75 people ho were given Metamucil for out 16 weeks. The discussion that blowed was understandably eated in calorie-conscious US, which imports 10,000 tonnes of the sed every year valued at \$ 25 million (Rs42.5 crore). This also had fallout in India—the world's larg-E allows yout istexporter of isabgol, 70 per cent of to the US. (India accounts for 95 Fir cent of world production.) ne beforehard

Once the Minnesota results were ut, P&G—which controls nearly e will be notablishe US isabgol market—asked he US Government's Food and ere you portions Administration (FDA) for pernission to sell Metamucil as an ist how brief er the counter drug. But the FDA thered. Meanwhile, other US comand EOS 850 danies got their acts together: Gen-

ral Mills launched Benefit, a syllium-enriched breakfast hile Kellogg launched Heartwise. cereal P&G promptly cried foul since Gen-

on and we'll

prochure:

al Mills and Kellogg were making ams it wasn't allowed to make for tamucil, Result: An FDA inquiry. Con-Quence: General Mills withdrew Benethough Kellogg still remains excited out the prospects of Heartwise.

The isabgol story in India was endifferent. Following the drought of % 87 in Gujarat and Rajasthan, the rice of isabgol sky-rocketed. Quickly, ADING COMPANIE TO It is abgol sky-rocketed. Quickly, rocketed by the prospects of reaping huge to he frward contracts for deliveries to be hade in the future at artificially low They then lobbied the Central covernment which fixed a minimum Aport price (MEP), pegged at \$ 3 (Rs 50) erks. This decision cast a pall of gloom n the market. Result: exports stood at

ISABGOL

One for the Heart

US study focuses attention on Indian digestive aid



Rs 38.8 crore last year, a Rs 2-crore decline over 1988. Another reason why this happened was that the Americans withdrew from the market, having stockpiled their needs for 18 months. Consequence: farmers are growing less isabgol this year.

Current prices in Gujarat are in the region of Rs 180 per bag of 20 kg or Rs 9 per kg. The profit margin is usually Rs 2 to Rs 3 per kg. Agents in Uniha, the market town near Sidhpur, expect a yield between 12,000 and 14,000 tonnes this year, about 3,000 tonnes less than the projected demand. Still, the outlook is hardly bleak as global demand has doubled in the last decade from 8,000 tonnes to 16,000 tonnes. Traders claim that if there was no floor price, exports could cross the Rs 100-crore mark by 1995.

"The floor price is a curse on us," complains the grandfather of the Gujarat isabgol industry. Kanchanlal Wadhwa of Sidhpur Sat-Isabgol. And across the globe at New York. James Libby of Finck-Jones-Libby, a US firm that handles isabgol trade. echoes similar sentiments: "The imposition of MEP has frustrated firms who considered developing new psyllium-based products." But another American isabgol trader Jerry Silberman warns: "Removal of the MEP will only benefit end-users, not farmers."

Opponents of MEP claim that the floor price for isabgol is around Rs 5 per kg higher than cost of production. If correct, this means that on exports of over 16,000 tonnes, the MEP creates a price differential aggregating some Rs 8 crore.

While the US and Indian traders crib about the MEP, farmers seem unaware of isabgol's burgeoning potential. For them, isabgol competes with cumin and mustard as a cash crop. Says farmer Shamjibhai: "I won't grow any isabgol this year because the price is not right." The crop is risky too. Farmer Moghjibhai Chaudhari explains: "Even one light shower can destroy it." Anticipating a shortage of isabgol, multinationals are scouting for alternative sources of supply, notably Mexico and Pakistan. Gurcharan Das, president, P&G India, remarks: "What should cause concern is that P&G is developing other sources of supply.'

The Government's argument in favour of the MEP is that it curbs under-invoicing and financial frauds by exporters and protects cultivators' interests. Das counters:

"I am against government intervention. I believe it neither helps the farmers nor does it increase the confidence of the buyers." Some Indian bureaucrats now say in private that the imposition of a MEP was perhaps a hasty step. And if this view prevails and the MEP is withdrawn, it just might be boomtime again for Sidhpur's traders.

Meanwhile, the action on the domestic front is hotting up. Many Indian manufacturers have begun packaging isabgol in Pan-Parag like sachets. Two companies hope to receive clearances for the manufacture of isabgol-based formulations. The idea is to step up domestic consumption which is barely 10 per cent of the annual production. There can be no doubt that the last hasn't been heard about dadima's favourite digestive -SALIL TRIPATHI in Unjha,

Sidhpur and Bombay

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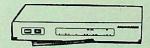
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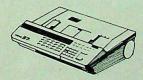
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APHRODISIACS

Return to the Roots

Variety of ayurvedic stimulants swamp the market

T'S a search as old perhaps as sex itself-for a magic drug which could help man regain his potency. In the classic avurveda text, Charaka Samhita, an entire section-the Vajikarana-is devoted to the art of staying permanently virile. For centuries, pandits and Pathans have dispensed all manner of exotic formulations-"Rooster's flesh fried in crocodile semen can give an erection for several nights," mentions Charaka. But the ultimate aphrodisiac is vet to be discovered.

Now a staggering variety of "male stimulants" are available over the counter, as a host of ayurvedic and pharmaceutical companies make a fast buck from the Indian's quest for eternal youth. In an expanding market, annual sales of so-called stimulants are estimated by industry sources to be around Rs40 crore. Apart from this, sales of the ayurvedic tonic Chyawanprashregarded by many as a sexual rejuvenator-also run into several crores.

Scores of pills and capsules containing tradi-

tional roots and minerals ashwagandha and shilajeet are being marketed with suggestive packaging and brand names like 303 and Lava. Even established business houses have entered this area of magic medicines—TTK Pharma of Madras has its own Mustong, a brand name obviously misspelt in a hurry to reach the gullible consumer.

Today's wonder ingredient, however, is not some rare Indian herb treasured by Charaka. It is a Korean white powder made from the root of the ginseng plant-valued by the ancient Chinese as an aphrodisiac. First launched four years ago by Duphar-Interfran, a Bombay pharmaceutical company, today its sales account for more than a quarter of the stimulant market. About nine brands are manufactured by pharmaceutical companies Wockhardt and Ranbaxy.

The latest entrant in the stimulant business is Ajanta Pharma. Last month. it launched its "energy rechargers" called Thirty Plus-which shrewdly combines ginseng with ashwagandhawith colour advertisements in major publications featuring film star Jeetendra. Said Subhash Chandran, marketing manager of Ajanta Pharma: "We have hit the market with 20 lakh capsules worth nearly Rs 1 crore.

The return to the roots in the aphro-

Magic drugs: hard sell

has suddenly gone up." Adds K. Gon krishnan, marketing planning man of Glenmark Pharmaceuticals: "The mand for ginseng is growing at are about 80 per cent annually."

The ginseng powder, promoted cure for stress, is also said to improve sexual functioning of diabetics Dr Shaukat Sadikot, an endocrinol at Bombay's Jaslok Hospital, says is no truth in the claim. India's known sexologist. Dr Prakash Kre who runs the Department of Se Medicine at Bombay's K.E.M. Hospita also sceptical: "These mushroom sextonics are nothing but an exp tion of the desperate by the ignorathey work at all, it is thanks to thepio of the horse or bull on the packet

But there may be hope for the weary. Jaslok Hospital has started

ompanies are cashing in on the Indian's quest for eternal youth by marketing exotic herbs.

disiac business follows the increasing awareness of traditional medicine among educated, urban Indians. The tensions of urban life, and the greater openness about sex, have created a need which is now being met by fancily named, packaged and priced pills. Says Rajiv Thatte, managing director of Indo-German Pharmaceuticals, makers of an ayurvedic rejuvenator: "The product has been there from time immemorial, but with the change in attitudes demand

Andrology Department to tackle problem of male impotency through multi-disciplinary approach, combin urology, endocrinology, surgery psychiatry. Explains urologist D Vaze: "Our success in curing impol is largely the result of proper diagram For instance, we had a patient, whi married for three and a half year had never had sex. The problem with the veins, which no amount popping would have helped. But as operation did the trick.

Nevertheless, in an age when are willing to take anything from dered pearls to rhinoceros horns sake of sexual fulfilment, the mark stimulants is likely to keep growing instead of the turbaned, mustach hakim promising to work wonder awkwardly phrased advertise glamorous film stars will now s soft-sell exotic roots and herbs quest for eternal youth. -M. RAF

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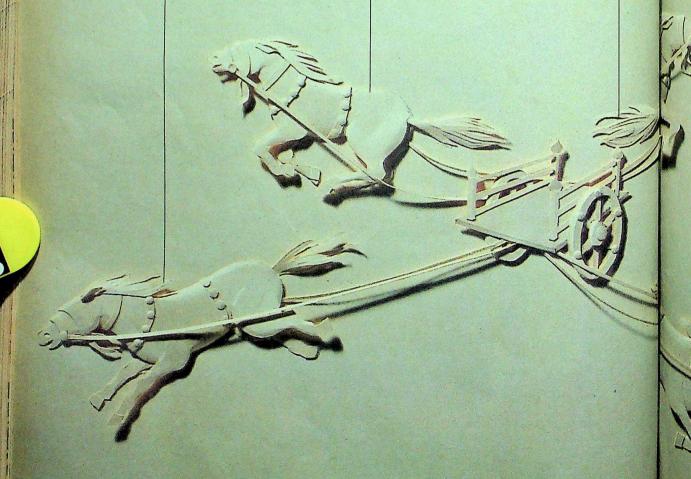
- Works Manager.

This happens everytime las critical bearing! How control plant if I'm not even supple basic machine parts? Anal get tools, accessories or ged the bearings! I think theet conspiracy brewing agairs

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athak's facets explored

ATHAK: INDIAN CLASSICAL ANCE ART SUNIL KOTHARI hinav Prakashan rce: Rs 800; Pages: 234



KATHAK is a highly colourful and dynamic style. dance Kathak: Indian Classical Dance Art does justice to it. The volume is a comprehensive one, assimilating as it does the re-

or hes of both dancers and expositors the art. Sunil Kothari brings comendable devotion to his exegesis, and sefforts are well enhanced by Avinash sicha's photographs.

The author traces the origins of lahak to the remote past. In or about first centuries of the Christian era. sage Bharata wrote the Natyahishtra, an encyclopaedia of dance aesktic and techniques. But clearly, he

uldn't have done so unstheterpsichorean arts adalready by then sucaded in giving subtle exression to the kathas rough a language of stures and movements. Our ancients longed Ananda, the ecstasy of dy-soul in the euphoria hich is union with the vine. In the words of intemporary chhu Maharaj: "I beguru

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come Krishna and Radha as I dance."

The cry of the worshipper tat tvam asi, in the longing to be the 'other', had already been uttered in the ensemble of dance and song, vibrating through the music of the flute to the thumps of the earthen pitcher-drum, in the language of eloquent figure movements, fluid eyes, moving eyebrows, assertive chin, revolving head, in unison with the lilt of the human voice.

From Kalidasa's poetry, we have evidence that during Vikramaditya Chandra Gupta's reign in 4th century A.D., there were celebrations of the seasons and the raslila of Krishna with his maids. The author traces how under the Sultanate of Delhi in the 13th century, poet laureate Amir Khushrau Delhvi, rehearsed dancers in the Kathak rhythms of the Braj country and established the dance tradition as a court art. The Mughal emperor. Akbar, revived the pleasures of dance recitals in the 16th century, in movements which absorbed the wild swirls of Central Asian dances into Kathak.

So popular was the appeal of dance and music that the bigot Aurangzeb banned both. Seeing a procession of musicians and dancers carrying a coffin, he asked who had died. On being told it was the corpse of music and dance, he

said: "Bury it as deep as possible.'

But, asserts Kothari, nothing could inter the ghost of Kathak. In the 19th century court of King Wajid Ali Shah of Oudh, the style was revived by the king himself who learnt to dance through a Lucknow gharana, which boasts descendants like Kalka Bindadin, Achhan Maharai,



(Below) Kothari; and a

Kathak performance

Lachhu Maharaj, Shambhu Maharaj and Birju Maharaj.

The book chronicles Kathak's present day dynamism too. Today, the Kathak Kendra of Delhi, along with Birju Maharaj and some enlightened exponents in other parts of the country, have put Kathak on the cultural map of India.

Kothari's book is an invocation of appreciation to the many talents involved in sustaining the joy of a dance form that is freer than the other classical -MULK RAJ ANAND

A Simple Story

Engaging saga, but little else

A FINE FAMILY by GURCHARAN DAS Penguin Books India Price: Rs 65: Pages: 347



THE Partition has spawned a vast variety of literary responses ranging from the realistic to the allegorical. In the first case, there are excellent novels like Khushwant Singh's graphic Train to

Pakistan and Bhisham Sahani's Tamas. The allegorical novels, in contrast, weave a family's history with that of the subcontinent, with inspired allusionsthe best example being Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children.

Where A Fine Family differs is in its ability to stretch the story further. Unlike Tamas, it does not end in blood and despair, and unlike Midnight's Children, its characters do not shape history. They are simple men and women who are forced by events to take up positions.

They are contented middle class people, with middle class dreams. But they possess true grit and emerge out of each crisis with honour as the family moves from the Kacheri Bazaar bungalow in Lyallpur to Chhota Simla first, and then to Bombay. It is a story of ordinary people like the proud lawyer, Lala Dewan Chand. He watches the world around him crumble as his nephew is lost to the freedom movement, his daughter, Tara, marries the son-in-law of his choice halfheartedly, and he has to leave Lyallpur against his will as his close Muslim friends espouse the cause of Pakistan.

The canvas is broad and the scope enormous. But Das's success lies in

making people ordinary without making them dull. Like all first novels, much of A Fine Family is autobiographical: like Tara, Das was born in Lyallpur; like Arjun (Tara's son), he took a corporate job in a consumer products company and rose to be its chief executive; and like Arjun's grandfather, Das went to art galleries-and in real life built up an excellent collection of modern Indian art. Even the underlying concerns are personal: scepticism about socialism, belief in private enterprise and dislike of religious fanaticism.

So much for the credit side. A Fine Family disappoints in its explanations. Perhaps keeping a foreign audience in his mind. Das spells out many customs. traditions, geographical areas and historical facts with nagging regularity. Although the references to the spiritual life of the Ashram and Hindu philosophy



Das: competent first novel

do not appear unreal, the conversations about them do. In fact, one misses stirring dialogue when great debates occur. Instead of letting his characters argue themselves hoarse, Das often intervenes and reports the debate, robbing it of tension. Two other developments fail to convince: Priti's transition from a vivacious girl to an ascetic devo Seva Ram's guru; and Anees's sp arrival in Bombay to play santoorf dying Lala, denouncing the Pakistan's reality unfolded. Even compromise Arjun settles forhis wife spends time at an ashram he concentrates on his job and de satisfaction by providing employment tribal women—seems unreal

Yet, the book is engaging. It demanding, it does not confu reader with a cast of thousands promptly develop incestuous and plicated relationships with one and and it is written smoothly. It is atal simply, the kind to read with feetun stool near the fireplace on a wintern At a time when fiction prides its appearing clever, A Fine Familus because of its simplicity.

-SALIL TRIP

RE you a textile designer on the look out for a documentation of sari-making techniques? There is no longer any need to pore through 15 dull books. Saris of India, a recent publication by Wiley Eastern Limited, promises to answer all the

questions you could ever care

Or perhaps you are hunting for details about India's new-look infantry division for warfare in the plains? There's help close at hand, in the Indian Defence Review, edited by Lieutenant-General Mathew Thomas and published twice a year by Lancer International.

Or maybe you're searching for an academic review

of classical dance? You've only to look up Natya Shastra: Swaradhyaya, published by Brihaspati Publications which was set up in 1984.

In the vast sea of Indian publishing, a new island has surfaced: specialist publication. Over a brief span of time, a bevy of new publishers has cropped up, putting out books catering to readers in specialised fields, There's Twenty Twenty Professions, established in 1987, whose books hand out advice on career options and Sage Publications, set up in 1981, whose speciality is policy studies and development. Little-known Sarita Prakashan in Meerut publishes books on earthquake engineering. Roli Publications specialises in pictorial books on tourism and art. And Kali for

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Books on career options; Saris of India; and the Indian Defence Review

Women publishes books to promothe feminist cause.

The established publishing house aren't far behind. Oxford University Press, for instance, will shortly issue books on ecology and environment sociology, themes in economy and

> history. Says Tejeshwz Singh, managing directord Sage Publications: "To kee pace with the growth of liter acy and book reading, pub lishers have to specialise."

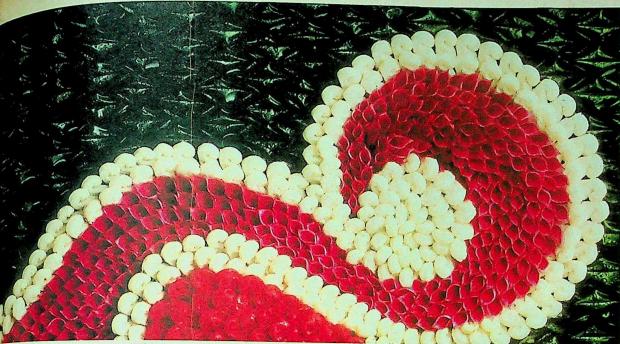
Others feel that special lised publications meet spe cific needs. Says Bhard Verma, who resigned for the army to set up Lance International in 1983: "I giving the soldier or a stude of war technology an India

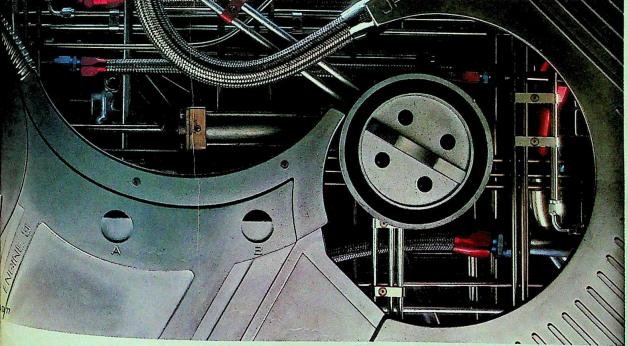
viewpoint, something he was starving for.'

Not all publishers, though, agre that specialisation is the theme of future. Says Asha Rani Mathur, exe utive editor of the books division Living Media India Limited: "It's marginal trend. We are talking books in very small numbers and with limited shelf life.'

R.K. Mehra of Rupa & Co concurs "Specialised books have limited mercial value. Bigger publishers in continue to do all kinds of saleating stuff." Nevertheless, he too is real ciled to the new trend. "With growth of readership, specialisation inevitable." That could be the word on the subject. —SHARMILA CHANDS

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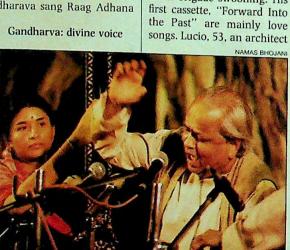
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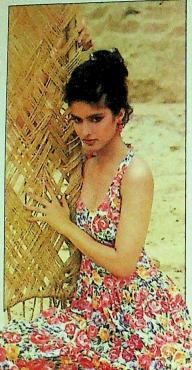
ALORE AA Club

Swaroop: bubbling with excitement

· It's a prickly border between the two neighbours: India and Pakistan. But border crossings of an unusual kind are now taking place. Shikha Swaroop, Miss India, 1988, and budding film star, recently became the first Indian model to be hired for an assignment in Pakistan. After location shooting in Naran near Karachi for soap advertisements, Singh returned all bubbly: "It was so exciting. I felt over the moon. I have finally arrived as a model." Well, it's tit for tat. Imran Khan made the first move by plugging Cinthol soap in India.

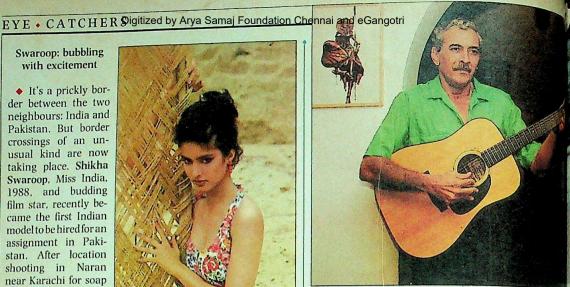
 The setting was highly unusual for a Kumar Gandharva concertthe magnificent 7th century Elephanta Caves near Bombay. But the maestro was clearly inspired, despite having been seriously ill for the last two years. And his voice was still golden, echoing none of the trauma of illness. Says he: "I wanted to evoke the genius of the makers of Elephanta." The piece de resistance was when Gandharava sang Raag Adhana





in praise of a meditating Shiva, in the shadow of the awesome 18 ft Maheshmurti. Heavenly harmony?

 Pop comes another star. Goa-based Lucio Miranda, cousin of cartoonist Mario Miranda, croons the kind of songs that should have the old Goan brigade swooning. His



Miranda: nostalgic notes

was discovered by the Indian pop king, Remo Fernandes, who has scored the music for

> the cassette. Gushes Remo: "Lucio's music is from a different era. It would have been a shame if he remained unheard." After this, will the duo go back to the future?



Sherwani: sheer spunk

 Smile, you're on candid camera. But Amina Sherwani, 25, ended up wiping off a few smiles as she posed as a pick-up girl in Delhi's Connaught Place soliciting customers for an expose on a Hindi video news magazine. Discreetly hidden cameras recorded the entire sequencefrom the solicitation, the ride into the night and finally to her boudoir.

Says the spunky Sher-

wani, who has earlier journalist in the popula Fauji: "Journalists spare Maya Tyagi a mala, so these men not be spared either wanted to show that h ordinary people and from outer space."

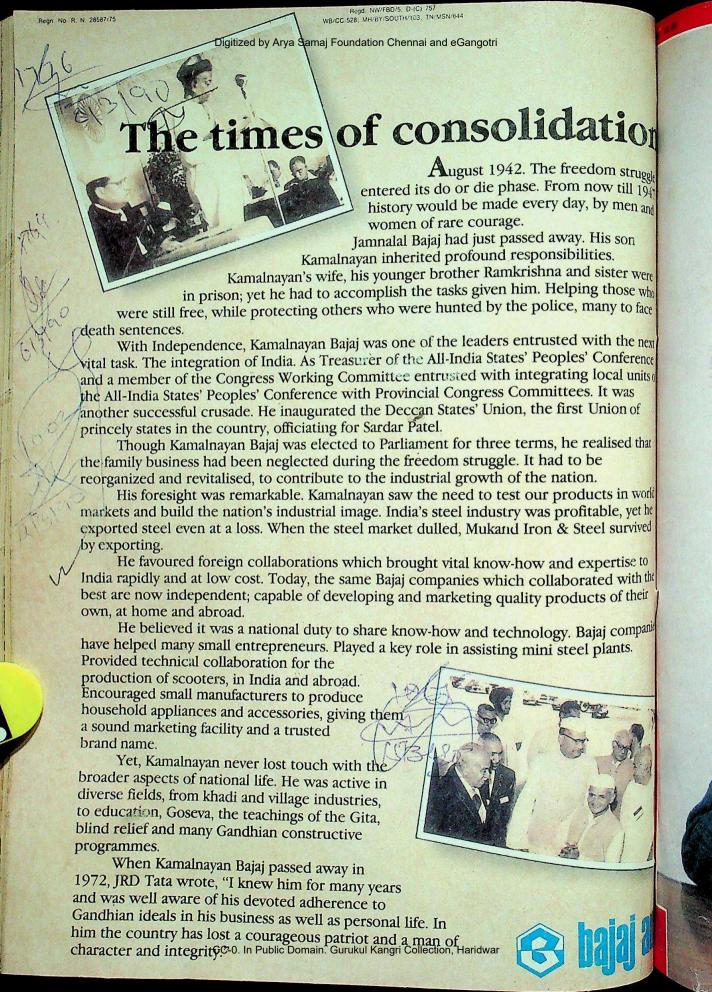
The front page have to wait. Kuldin with his long, newsyn ambling shuffle-isoft don to see the Que rather, present his cred as India's new high a sioner in Britain. And maybe create news i of reporting it. Nayar oping of the prize po surprised many, but he illusions about his ne "I'm hardly the dipli suppose I'll have reticent." In other between the lines.

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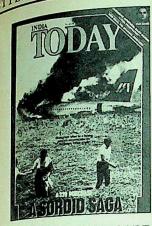
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Bangalore

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> EDITORIAL OF FIRSTE 1315801... EDIA PADIA LIM ORAY CRCULA' ARIMAN FOINT ARIE LIVMEDIA



HASTE AND DISREGARD

The crash of Indian Airlines' Flight IC 605 at Bangalore ("A Sordid Saga", March 15) may not necessarily have occurred due to a snag in the A 320 Airbus. But the disregard for procedure shown by the Rajiv government while buying this aircraft and the lack of proper ground facilities at the airports add to the possibility of wrongdoings. H.P. SINGH New Delhi

DANGEROUS PORTENTS

The danger of yet another war with Pakistan is clearly looming large on the horizon ("War Games", February 28). Allefforts made by India for a reconciliation have come to naught. Pakistan continues to provide material support to terrorists both in Punjab and Kashmir. New Delhi S.V. JASWAL

- Let's hope the confrontation between India and Pakistan is restricted to games, and does not change to reality. Vadodara AMIT LOIWAL
- Every leader who has been in power in Pakistan has adopted a hostile posture lowards India, primarily due to domestic compulsions. Benazir Bhutto's ascent to power had raised hopes of a change, but her recent utterances completely belied

Bangalore

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U.S. IYER

ACT OF AGGRESSION

Pakistan's abetment of separatists in Punjab and Kashmir is clearly an open act of aggression ("Raising the Stakes". February 28). India should not shy away

from this reality and should settle the issue with the Pakistanis, even if it means going to war.

New Delhi RAHUL KUMAR

An Indo-Pak war would invite the intervention of superpowers in the region. Therefore, it is important that we resolve our differences on Kashmir by peaceful means. If the Kashmiris want independence, they should get it. However, areas such as Ladakh must remain with India.

Mysore

RAJIV JAGDISHA RAO

It is futile to expect better relations between India and Pakistan. The minority governments of both countries continue to stay in power by keeping the Kashmir issue alive.

Kanpur

RAAJ GOPAL MEHROTRA

TIGHTROPE WALK

Jammu and Kashmir Governor Jagmohan's efforts to redress the grievances of Kashmiri Muslims will certainly go a long way in restoring normalcy in the state ("Asserting Authority", February 28). However, the V.P. Singh Government should not give in to the BJP's suggestion to abrogate Article 370.

New Delhi SHAILENDRA KUMAR

The only solution to the Kashmir problem is to give priority to the issue of providing job opportunities to the youth. This way the youth, whose energies are being channelled into militant activities, can be brought back into the national mainstream.

Malappuram, Kerala ZAKIR HUSSAIN K.T.

■ It is heartening to know that Jagmohan is making a genuine attempt to restore law and order in the Kashmir

Bhubaneswar

D. MAHAPATRA

If stringent measures are not taken to curb the infiltration of arms and insurgents from across the Indo-Pak border, Jagmohan's ordeal in Kashmir will not end.

New Delhi

D.N. DHAR

■ Though former Jammu & Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah may have been inept in dealing with the explosive situation in the valley, he is still

the only secular and patriotic political voice from the region.

RAVEENDRA NATH

MURKY METHODS

It is shocking to discover the extent to which some people will stoop to tarnish the image of others ("Calling to Account", February 28). Thankfully, the entire St Kitts affair has boomeranged on those who hatched the conspiracy.

Hyderabad

A. SUBROTO MUKHERJEE

A BRASH BRIGADE

It has become a fashion for MBAs to impress company managements falsely with their high-sounding jargon ("Sitting Pretty", February 28). New MBA recruits begin with the assumption that whatever their predecessors did was wrong. And the trouble is that a lot of managements wear blinkers and encourage new recruits at the expense of senior personnel.

Madras

P. RAMAKRISHNAN

MBAs are not making a big sacrifice by joining public sector organisations. The truth is that the salaries in the public sector today easily match those in the private sector.

Ahmedabad

DIBEYENDU GANGULY

■ Not everyone with an MBA degree is in search of excellence. For most, the coveted degree is just a passport to a cushy life. And at times, the MBAs reveal themselves to be cocky and arrogant. The fact is that no amount of academic work can be an adequate substitute for practical experience.

Bangalore

D.B.N. MURTHY

REMARKABLE SUCCESS

The manner in which the Tata group ("Heady Heights", February 28) has been able to hold itself together has enabled it to successfully diversify into everything from soap to steel. With the success of Tatamobile and Taj Bengal. the group has proved its mettle once again.

Varanasi

AMBRISH SAHNI

■ The success of the Tata group is not surprising. Any organisation that takes

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good care of its employees' welfare is bound to grow.

Calcutta BHUPEN BOSU

RISING RESENTMENT

While there is nothing wrong in reserving seats in educational institutions ("A Brewing Battle", February 28), selection for jobs should be on the basis of merit.

Tamil Nadu

S.V. BANTH

The anti-reservation agitations in the country reflect the discontent among educated unemployed youth who fail to secure jobs, even as those with less ability manage to get them.

Gorakhpur

JAIDEEP MITTRA

■ The Government should abolish its reservation policy as it leads to a feeling of discrimination among the masses. The policy is also responsible for brain drain to a large extent.

Jalandhar

MANISH KOTWAL

The rationale behind reservations still holds good as a sizeable section of society is backward and needs support.

Calcutta

PAWAN DHALL

WRONG PRIORITIES

If Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala is so determined to indulge his whims ("Disneyland Drama", February 28), then perhaps he should use the land in his ancestral village. No country can consider the building of an amusement park on useful agricultural land a priority.

Chandigarh

SHIKHA MATHUR

Chief Minister Chautala should realise that what instills confidence in children in the western world are not rides in amusement parks but the superior educational and other facilities received by them. Instead of indulging in such extravaganzas and wasting thousands of acres of prime agricultural land, he should try to give better educational and medical facilities to poor farmers.

Kanpur

LIBERALISE THE LAW

Why can't the requirement of the Customs Clearance Permit ("Wheeling Dealing", February 28) for used cars be waived, the duty for all engine sizes made uniform and brought down to a realistic level so that one is not tempted to evade duty?

New Delhi

H.C. SHARMA

DELIBERATE DENIAL

I was a little surprised to read you remark ("Rising Star". February 28 accusing me of propagating falsehood on the question of Devi Lal's statement on Indian Christians asking them to get to Europe and America. Devi Lal's denig is nothing but an attempt to cover by what others must have now information in an embarrassment.

New Delhi

MJ. ARBU

STALLING THE SERIAL

The Government has done well it stopping the telecast of *The Sword of Tip Sultan* ("Communal Casualty", February 28). It is not correct to project Tipus a secular hero when it is known that it desecrated hundreds of Hindu temple Srirangan

C. NARASIMHAMURE

People should view the teleseral a wider perspective. The communaling dents attributed to Tipu Sultan were the handiwork of his subordinates who were not happy with his compassion of the common folk. Tipu's secularism evident from the fact that the Swar Ranganath temple was in the vicinity his palace. Also his prime minister many of his ministers and generals was Hindus.

New Delhi

RAJEEV PRASAD SING

A BOLD STEP

There is no doubt that with glass and perestroika, Soviet President Mikhi Gorbachev has radically altered the litical fabric of the world ("Pangs Change", February 15). The reforminitiated by him required immense courage, especially since there are still man diehard conservatives within the Sorie Communist Party who are allergicious winds of change.

Madras

SASHIN

Gorbachev who initiated reforms incerity is facing the present crisis Orissa K. SARATH CHANG

UNCERTAIN FUTURE

In spite of provisions in the later children very often have to live with hardened criminals in remand how ("A Chained Childhood", February). The delay in deciding their cases adds to their misery. It results in a brin their education and they fact uncertain future when released. Cuttack

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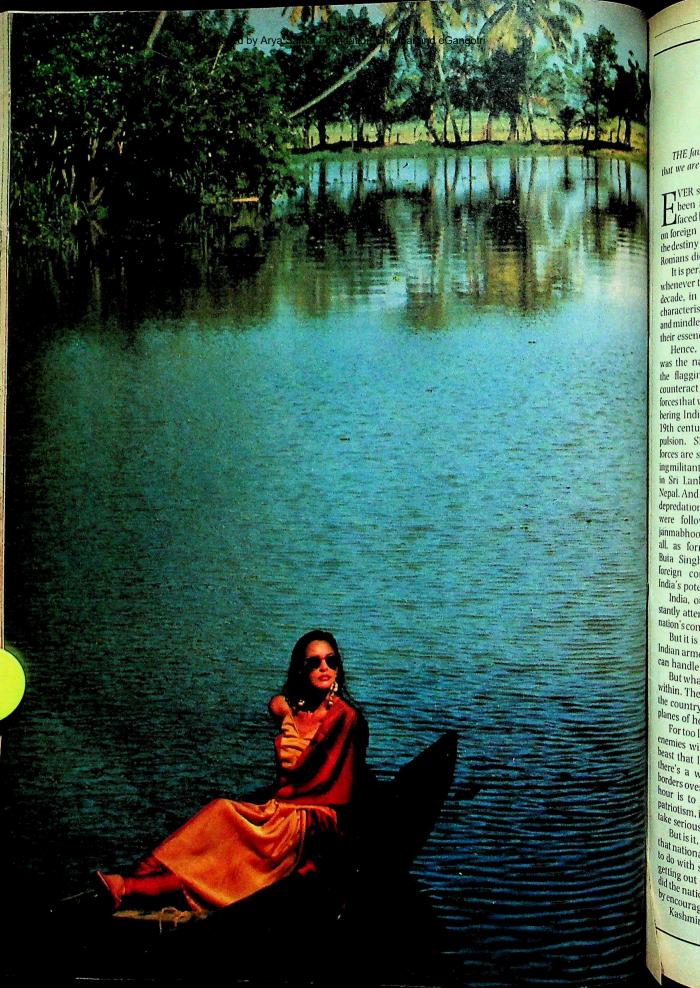
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The Enemy Within

THE fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings. -Julius Caesar

VER since this country achieved nationhood there has been a tendency on the part of its leaders, whenever faced by adversity, to blame it on a conspiracy of history, on foreign forces, on the contradictions of class warfare, on bedestiny of mass psychology. And, of course, as the ancient Romans did, on fate.

Itis perhaps a singular Indian trait to look for scapegoats whenever the crying need is for brutal self-criticism. The last decade, in particular the Indira-Rajiv Gandhi period, was characterised by facile invocations of political demonology and mindless xenophobia in the face of problems that were in their essence the creations of politics and politicians.

Hence, Operation Bluestar was the natural reassertion of the flagging national will to counteract latent imperialist forces that were bent on dismembering India according to some 19th century geopolitical compulsion. Similarly, imperialist forces are supposed to be plantingmilitant anti-Indian mischief in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. And when the communal depredations of the last five years were followed by the Ramjanmabhoomi movement, it was all, as former home minister Buia Singh put it, part of a foreign conspiracy to impair India's potential for greatness.

India, our leaders have constantly attempted to din into the

nation's consciousness, is under siege. And the truth is, that it is. But it is a siege not from Nepal or Pakistan, or China. The Indian armed forces are both capable and confident that they can handle any external threat.

But what is more difficult to handle is the siege that is from within. The enemy within is what is far more dangerous for the country's unity and integrity than the guns and warplanes of hostile nations.

For too long has the country been engaged in a search for enemies without having the political guts to confront the beast that lies coiled within its own belly. At a time when there's a whole lot of sabre-rattling across international borders over the Kashmir question, and when the need of the hour is to issue clarion calls for the display of vigorous patriolism. Patriotism, it is perhaps a little intemperate to suggest that we lake serious stock of our own follies.

Butisit, even in times such as these, gratuitous to suggest that national level politicians and political parties had plenty to do with to do with stoking the fires that led to the Punjab problem getting out of getting out of hand? For petty political and partisan benefit, did the nation did the nation not willy-nilly play into the hands of Pakistan by encouraging at willy-nilly play into the hands of Pakistan

by encouraging the emergence of extremist groups in Punjab?

Kashmir I and a has always kashmir's history and relationship with India has always

been turbulent with periods of calm and sobriety which were a constant source of frustration to Pakistan. The recent revelations of Operation Topac—Pakistan's low-level "warfare" notwithstanding, none who has recorded the history of Kashmir since 1986 can honestly deny that the current crisis and popular alienation, which have once again made the valley a happy hunting ground for Pakistan, are the result of the malign neglect and opportunistic exploitation of Kashmir by the coalition that ruled over it with an iron fist for three years. A coalition whose very political legitimacy was in severe doubt following the 1987 state elections in which the Congress(I) and the National Conference rigged the polls. disenfranchised the people and robbed them of their sovereignty.

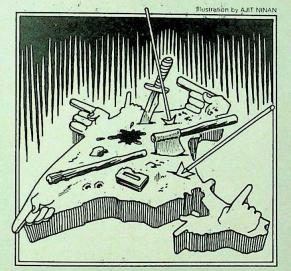
The cry of "foreign hand" may not be a cry of wolf

altogether. But it ignores the fact that this country's politicians are the culprits responsible for greening the pastures and bringing the wolf to their doors. Which brings us to what happened in the Meham assembly election. Here, lives were lost and the world witnessed brutality on a scale unprecedented in the annals of the country's electoral

What was also lost in the horror of Meham, was the national honour. India, notwithstanding the economic deprivation and poverty of her people, has always prided herself as a civilised nation whose democratic ideals have withstood the test of time barring periodic dys-

functions. But Meham was no dysfunction. Nor an aberration. It was politically logical. For the past five years politicians have aided and abetted communal violence, separatist frenzies, whether in Darjeeling, or in Assam, and electoral thuggeeism. They have armed their supporters, created goon squads like the Jat Green Brigade of Harvana, and have condoned and even celebrated the entry of murderers and brigands into established political parties.

When politicians exploited extremists in Punjab or rigged elections in Kashmir, it was easy for them to blame the disastrous aftermath on foreign forces. But today, it has happened in the heart of India, in Haryana. Meham has brought disgrace on the entire nation and raised disturbing questions about the commitment of the Janata Dal to valuebased politics. Again, there will be the usual excuses, the conspiracy theories, the desire to blame the whole stinking episode on others. But the truth is that India is entering the age of unprecedented political gangsterism. Yes, this is a time for vigorous patriotism, to fight not some imaginary foreign hand but the indigenous forces of destruction that are sapping this nation of its vitality-its democratic lifeblood. And not merely patriotism. This is also the time to enforce the law of the land. And to do it with fear and favour towards none.

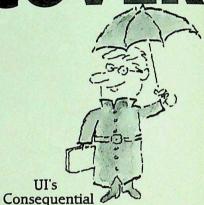


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Economist Envoy

 Abid Hussain, the affable. white-maned economist had pretty much reconciled himself to a life of professorial wilderness following his exit from the Planning Commission when the National Front Government took over. So it came to him as a surprise



when he received a call last fortnight from V.P. Singh asking for a 10:30 a.m. meeting at the prime minister's residence. He had no clue as to what awaited him.

Perhaps what made Hussain choke on his morning cup of tea at 8 a.m. on the day of the scheduled meeting was an item in the papers that he had been selected for the post of ambassador to the US. There was hardly any time for Hussain to determine whether the story was merely reportorial chitchat. For, within the hour V.P. Singh called him again and asked Hussain to see him immediately because he had a post that "I will not allow you to refuse". The newspapers were right.

And word soon spread. A day later, Hussain went to a dinner at which another new plenipotentiary, Kuldip Nayar, bound for the Court of St. James was also present. Both bowed to each other with exclamations of "Your Excellency!" Then they would

have had a spirited chat about the rough and tumble of the Delhi days they are leaving behind.

Panditji's Play

• The occasional visitor might have taken the drumbeating as part of Panditji's latest yagna to propitiate the gods to turn the sagging political fortunes of his family. But he is in for a surprise. Instead of incantatory Sanskrit someone breaks into chaste Haryanvi. There are strains of folk music and the husky voice being arduously imitated is a very familiar one.

On the sprawling lawns of 9, Janpath, Kamlapati Tripathi's residence, fresh rehearsals are on for the street-play Aiyore Hamara Tau-a pungent caricature of Choudhary Devi Lal. The producer is Surva Swamy, a young lecturer from Karnal in Haryana, and the husband of Tripathi's granddaughter.

Last fortnight Tripathi sent invitations for a special

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



performance of the play-performed during the assembly elections-at his residence. Rajiv Gandhi, his neighbour at 10, Janpath, was expected to come for a little bit of mirth as an escape from the all-encompassing gloom, but didn't turn up. Nevertheless, Panditji's show went on.

Foreign Domestics

 The not-so-balmy winds of controversy from the Caribbean tax haven of St Kitts rustled through the office of External Affairs Minister I.K. Gujral last fortnight in the form of a delegation of very, very perturbed foreign service officials.



The cause of the IFS officials' visit was the recent revelations on the St Kitts affair carried by INDIA TODAY. These had shown that no less a person than former external affairs minister Narasimha Rao had pressured an IFS official in New York to grant affidavits that would link V.P. Singh with a laundered account in St Kitts. And besides, a host of other government officials. persons close to Congress(I) and even foreign nationals had tried to force IFS officials to participate in the operation to smear Singh's reputation.

Commendably, at least a few of them had resisted. Now, the IFS officials had come in to tell Gujral that enough was enough, that he should ensure that the IFS was not politicised in the manner the IAS had been and turned into an appendage of the party in power. Otherwise, they said, they would have no option but to ask for domestic postings. So, what would that make it? The

Indian Domestic Service or. given the proclivities of our ministers, the Indian Domes tics Service?

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Anwar's Akhbar

The youthful Bihar Con. gress(I) leader Tariq Anwaris a harried man these days. The one-time blue-eyed boy d Rajiv Gandhi has received a succession of unexpected shocks. First, he lost the presidentship of the State Congress(I) to the manipulative skills of Jagannath Mishra Then, he lost the Lok Sabha arvery little a election from Katihar.

And now, he sees a distinct threat to his unofficial position as the new generation Muslim leader of the state with the emergence of M.J. Akbar who won from Kishangani.

Anwar now fears that Akbar may already be robbing him of the robes of the representative of the state's Muslim community. Akbar's advantage, Tariq feels, is the clouthe enjoys as a former editor anda writer of considerable skill.



So Anwar has decided 10 fight fire with fire. He has privately announced that he's planning to bring out a hard hitting Urdu tabloid with Hindi edition to follow. But Anwar's friends quip: what would happen if Akbar make a request to write a column in Anwar's paper?

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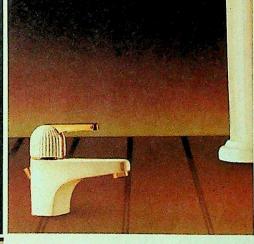
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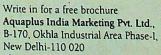
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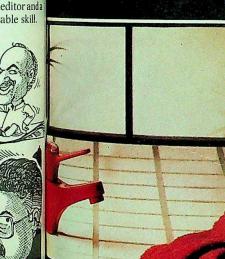
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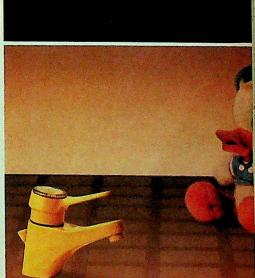
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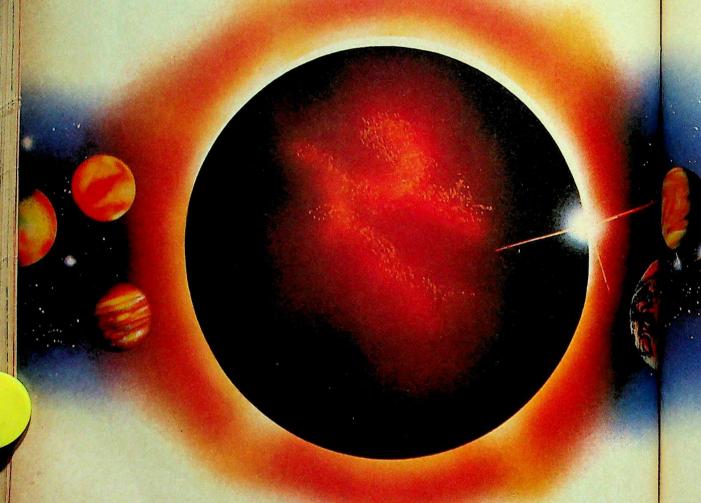
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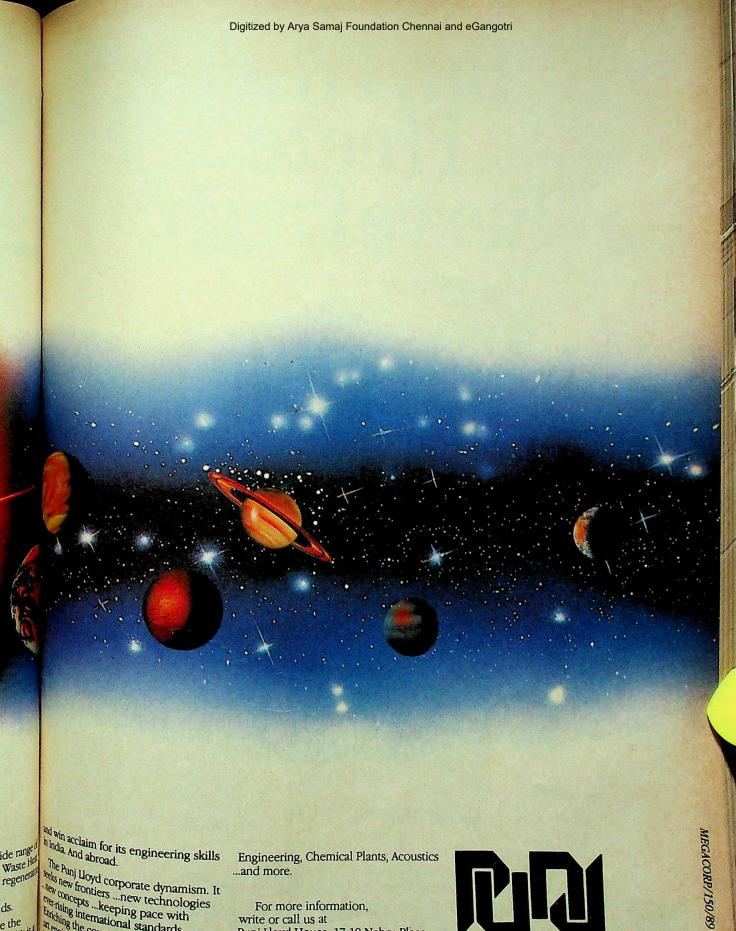
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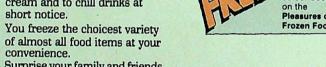
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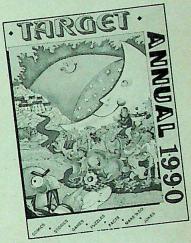


- The people of Maharashtra have elected a lesser evil.
 - MRINAL GORE, state Janata Dal president, in The Independent
- Itis not feasible to intervene in the affairs of a country plagued by an agitation v.P. SINGH, ruling out interference in Nepal bu its own people.
- Even a country like the US described the repression in Nepal as undesirable. How could India remain silent? CHANDRA SHEKHAR
- What has India gained from Kashmir? It has been a problem all along. It is a lump in its throat.
- IQBAL AKHUND, special security adviser to Pakistan Prime Minister BENAZIR BHUTTO
- Hard times are ahead for the Congress(I) but I will live with the Congress(I) and die with it. KAMALAPATI TRIPATHI in New Delhi
- Rajiv (Gandhi) really parachuted into the position of prime minister because of us. We got him down from the plane. ■ VASANT SATHE in The Telegraph
- Idon't know how many Congressmen have spines.
 - GEORGE FERNANDES about the possibility of a split in the Congress(I)
- The CPI(M) will withdraw its support to the National Front Government if it forms a coalition with the BJP at the Centre.
 - E.K. NAYANAR, Kerala chief minister
- People were very happy with me then, now they are so pleased to have me ■ JAGMOHAN, Jammu & Kashmir governor, in Sunday
- It is not value-based politics, it is gun-based politics. Congress(I) general secretary, reacting to the poll violence in Meham, Haryana
- Ekdam peaceful.

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- OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA about the Meham assembly by-election, in Newstrack
- The entire team deserves to be thrown into the Pacific.
 - BISHAN SINGH BEDI after the Indian cricketers' defeat in the one-day match against Australia at Christchurch, New Zealand
- * If my husband left me for another woman, I would be very vicious....My hodness, my low left me for another woman, I have him no peace. wodness, my loyalty and my honesty would leave him no peace.
 - JAYA BACHCHAN in Cine Blitz

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DANGLING DRIVER

For those who haven't been able to achieve spiritual levitation, the capital's traffic department has an answer. Its crane operators, always anxious to tow a car, promise instant upliftment-of the body, at least, if not the soul.

One Maruti driver in the capital can certainly testify to



that. Barely had he switched off the ignition that the traffic department's overzealous crane operators hooked on to the car's bumper. The startled driver-still inside the car-suddenly found himself taking off from the ground and was soon in a state of suspended animation.

Hearing screams from high above, a crowd collected

and spotted the flailing hands of the driver. They too began shouting at the crane operators who just kept shouting back instead of bringing down the car. However, the pull of the masses soon proved greater than the resis. tance of the crane men. And they were forced to bring the desperate dangling driver and his car back to earth,

HARD SELL

Kashmiri shawl merchants have come up with a new marketing strategy. Eager to grab every opportunity they can, the shawl merchants are now cashing in on the political situation in their home state.

The selling line is that this might just be the last opportunity to buy some of their embroidered exquisitely shawls. Somehow, the shawl merchants have managed to convince most Delhi housewives that they might not be able to sell in India for long, due to the violent agitation in the state. Instead, say the merchants, they will be walking the streets of Pakistan which they will be forced to



accept as their new country.

Apprehensive of short. ages, panic-stricken house. wives have begun hoarding the shawls as if there were no tomorrow. In fact, in their desperation, these women have even glossed over the exorbitant prices being charged. Some have even been coughing up as muchas Rs 10,000 for a shawl.

STINGING SPEECHES

■ Talk about emotional blackmail. This candidate for the assembly elections from Nurpur in Himachal Pradesh had an unusual method of campaigning. He requested his voters to give him their votes, and if their votes were not available then he would like a bundle of wood instead.



The self-sacrificing candidate would much rather set up a pyre with wood thus collected and immolate himself than suffer the ignominy of losing the election. But not quite content with putting the voters on a guilt trip, he went further and put the fear of death in them.

He declared that if he was forced to die on the pyre, he would resurrect in the form of a snake and bite all those who had not voted for him in the elections.

Doubtless, this was political rhetoric with a sting. Though it is not known how many voted for him, this candidate's method if followed by others, will surely inject even more venom into electoral battles.

OPEN BANK

■ Even as banks all over the country are going silly protecting themselves-installing alarms and posting armed guards-there's a certain bank in Haryana's Manheru village that practically invited robbers in. Its staffers threw all security pre-

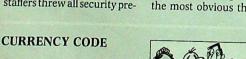
cautions to the winds and left the bank doors open one evening after a drinking binge within the bank's premises.

But the local residents reacted quite in contrast to the mayhem in the rest of the state. Amazed to find the doors of the bank ajar as they strolled past at night, they did the most obvious thing. No.



they didn't rob the bank They called the police.

Within minutes screeching police sirens were heard piercing the silence of the night. And the bank doors were sealed. Oblivious of their folly, the staffers arrived the next morning, rubbing their eyes in amazement at the sealed doors of the bank.



■ A counterfeit ten-rupee note that surfaced recently in Kerala shows that even criminals give the gods their due. This particular note made no pretence about the fact that it was not meant for ordinary people. "I promise truth never fails: Jesus"



printed on a recently discovered ten-rupee note where the normal promissory legend is printed.

The currency note, which otherwise had a stunning resemblance to the real one, had also altered the name of the Reserve Bank to the "Revision Test of the Bible". All this catechism is apparently code language meant only for the agents who help push bundles of fake notes into circulation.

On the positive side, not all Christians will be seen complaining about these notes being in circulation Especially so in an age when truth is not much in currency.

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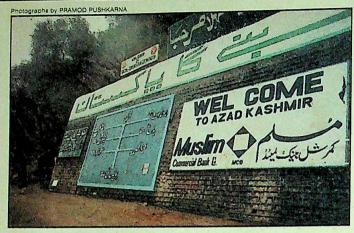
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The 'Other' Kashmir

Fundamentalist frenzy and an anti-India sentiment dominate a pathetically underdeveloped area

Pakistan calls it 'Azad Kashmir'. India refers to it as Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). Following convulsions in Srinagar, this disputed territory has suddenly emerged from obscurity and become the centrestage for frenzied anti-India activity.

What is the 'other' Kashmir like? How serious are the intentions of its residents? Is it really the promised land that Pakistani propaganda makes it out to be?

Because of its sensitive nature, POK has always been out of bounds for Indians. Last fortnight, INDIA TODAY obtained permission for Principal Correspondent KANWAR SANDHU and Senior Photographer PRAMOD PUSHKARNA to tour the area—the first Indian journalists to visit POK (population: 2.5 million).

Sandhu and Pushkarna travelled to areas where no Indian has ever set foot and often had to conceal their identities in the face of rabid anti-India hostility prevalent there. Sandhu's report:



OR an Indian, this is no time to be travelling through 'Azad Kashmir'. The hostility and loathing towards anything connected to India is something tangible and frighteningly real. However, the President of 'Azad Kashmir', Sardar Abdul Qayyum, acts with surprising alacrity on our request to visit the area and deputes an official escort to accompany us on a tour of the 'other' Kashmir, including places where no Indian has ever been since 1947—not officially at least.

The fundamentalist frenzy that has convulsed the area is nakedly evident the moment you enter POK at Kohala. The sign, 'Welcome to Azad Kashmir', is dwarfed by the boldy scrawled graffiti in Islamic green: "Kashmir Banega Pakistan" (Kashmir will become Pakistan).

Closer to Muzaffarabad, the capital of 'Azad Kashmir', the graffiti and posters become more ubiquitous and increasingly strident in tone. "Dukhtre Kashmir Ke Pairon Ki Zanjeeren Katne Ki Ghari Aa Pahunchi Hai" (The time to cut the shackles of slavery from anguished Kashmir has arrived).

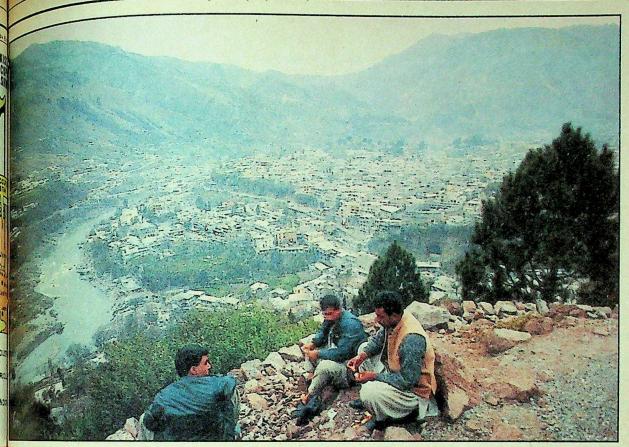
Muzaffarabad, a four-hour drive from Islamabad, is where the old Rawalpindi-Murree road branched off for Srinagar in pre-Partition days. Once a sleepy, sprawling township shunned by civil servants, it is today the centre-stage of political activity and fundamentalist fervour for 'liberation' of Kashmir.

Muzaffarabad is also the headquare of the Kashmir Liberation Cell, set wi 1987 to "promote the cause of self-det mination of the Kashmiris" for which officially receives Rs 50 lakh a year for the federal and the POK Government

In Mirpur township, the frenzy iset greater. Every inch around Shaheed Chowk, the centre of religio-politicals tivity, is covered with anti-India grant and posters. Some posters curse t Shimla Agreement, others the family Sheikh Abdullah. A quote from the Qua exhorting people to rise "in support those being trampled" is emblazonede huge banner.

Much of the fervour is also fuelled propaganda, most of it dubious in nation Everybody one meets speaks of "hunds of refugees" who have supposedly cross over from the Indian side in recent web However, when I ask to meet some them, the response is evasive. Finally, "hundreds" are reduced to around families who are supposedly in Bagb. of the more remote districts.

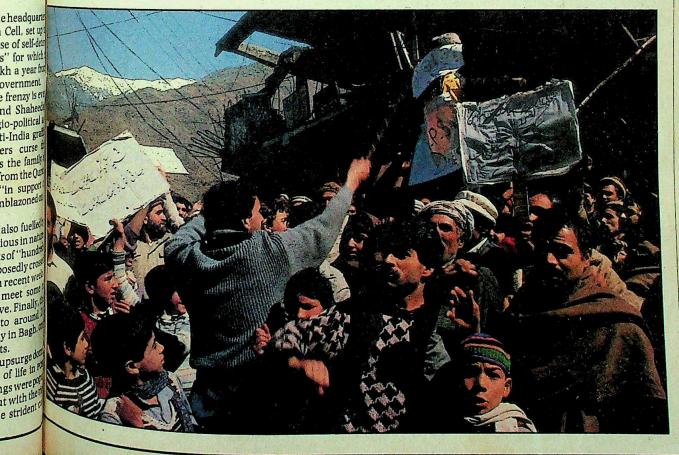
The current emotional upsurgeduc nates almost every aspect of life in Till recently, Indian film songs were po lar throughout the area. But with the of fundamentalism and the strident



Muzaffarabad's placid look conceals the anti-India frenzy that has convulsed the area

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for 'liberating' Kashmir, new songs have been spawned and lyrics have changed. The most popular cassette in POK, available everywere, is called Kashmir Se Aati Hai Sada. The opening stanza of the cassette goes: Allah ho Akbar/Marde Mujahid/ Marde Khuda/Talwar Utha/Maidan me aa. (Allah is great, O warrior of Islam, O warrior of the lord, pick up your sword, and come onto the battle-field.)

All over POK, in villages and decrepit hamlets, anti-India processions in which effigies of V.P. Singh are burnt or belaboured with sticks have become almost a daily ritual. Young students carrying placards and banners swarm the streets extolling the public to contribute to the 'Jehad Fund' for Kashmir's liberation.

THE response is awe-inspiring. Invariably every Friday, after the afternoon prayers at the mosques, fiery sermons are given on the need to wage Jehad. "It is now or never," blare the loudspeakers.

Being an Indian in POK is obviously a major disadvantage. But for a Sikh, it is clearly an asset. At checkposts, policemen wave to us on seeing my turban. For the people of 'Azad Kashmir', a Muslim is a friend, and a Hindu an enemy. A Sikh falls somewhere in between. Because of the present turbulent situation in Punjab, all Sikhs are believed to be on their side. The inevitable question is: "How is your Khalistan movement going?" This is immediately followed by a diatribe against Hindus.

The emotional frenzy makes it easier for them to accept propaganda as gospel. Many people we meet narrate stories about Sikh soldiers in the Indian Army refusing to open fire on Kashmiris. They look at me incredulously when I try to explain that no such thing has happened and that the Indian Army is totally apolitical.

But being a Sikh isn't always an advantage. For one, it easily identifies you as an Indian and in the midst of the emotional and religious frenzy that has energised the area, all Indians are potential targets. Chakothi is a dilapidated little town where a 4,000-strong mob assembled last month and scrambled across the barbed wire road block of the Pakistan Army in an attempt to cross the actual line of control. Indian border troops were forced to open fire.

Three people were killed and some of the wounded are recovering in the local army hospital. Naturally, anti-India feelings are still at fever-pitch. "Youth carrying Kalashnikovs are moving about and as Indians you could be the targets." warns a police officer. Finally, I had to take

a decision to wear a hat over my turban, and pretend to be a part of a team of Sri Lankan journalists.

Despite the relative freedom of movement we are allowed, our escorts take care to steer us clear of sensitive military areas and ensure that our movements are carefully monitored. (Most of рок is a field area with 13 brigades stationed there.)

Foreign journalists, in contrast, have no such restrictions. In Muzaffarabad, we are taken to the official guest-house rather than the hotel we had planned to stay in, obviously to keep track of our movements.

Not that there are many decent hotels in 'Azad Kashmir'. The one in Muzaffarabad, Al Abbas, is perhaps the only one that qualifies as such. It is obvious that it is only recently that developmental work

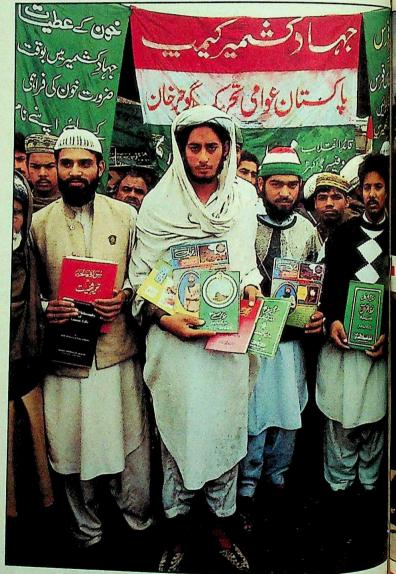
has started in the area. For the most 'Azad Kashmir' is still fairly backward primitive. The roads are maintained haps to facilitate troop movement, villages and smaller towns are anything but prosperous.

Unlike Jammu & Kashmir, touris not a source of income and only picturesque Neelam valley has any ca to being attractive to visitors. Wh even more surprising is that there an local newspapers. In fact, the first daily, Azadi, was started in Muzaffara only last fortnight.

Compared to Jammu & Kash 'Azad Kashmir' is an island of neg although over the past five years, mendous effort has been made in dere mental areas like rural electrification primary education. Timber is the slogans

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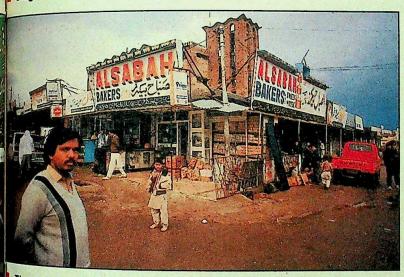
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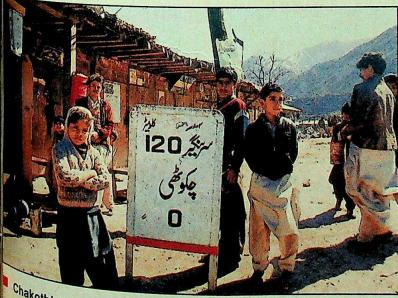
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aber is the slogans for Kashmiri independence painted on the hills



The new market-place in Mirpur town



^{Chakothi}, the last POK village; milestone shows Srinagar 120 km

prominent industry in the area and Muzaffarabad is famous for its traditional walnut furniture industry. But even that is now crippled for lack of adequate marketing and distribution. Mirpur, near the Mangla Dam, is only now being developed as an industrial town due to its proximity to the Grand Trunk Road and businessmen are starting to set up factories in the area.

Muzaffarabad district was among the most backward districts in the subcontinent before Partition and due to the subsequent political uncertainty, very little economic progress is visible. In fact, the modern office buildings of the prime minister and the secretariat in the new Chattar area of Muzaffarabad have been built only recently.

Yet in the present fundamentalist fervour, such drawbacks are largely viewed as inconsequential. As Dr Khan Zaman Mirza, director of the School of Islamic Studies, says: "A man never lives by bread alone.'

SLAMISATION has ensured that most Kashmiris in POK are fervently for Kashmir's accession to Pakistan. The Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) of Amanullah Khan, which propagates an independent Kashmir, does not, consequently, enjoy any significant following. In fact, the one word that seems to override everything is Istissowab-e-Rai (plebiscite).

The Shimla Agreement cuts no ice here-in fact, it does not even figure as a topic of debate. As a senior leader in Muzaffarabad, Sheikh Aqeel-ur-Rehman of the Jamait-e-Tulba, says: "We will spill every drop of our blood in the Jehad for which we are preparing people." He claims that they have arranged training camps in the hills, but refuses to get into specifics. Leaders like him, in fact, criticise the Government of Pakistan and рок for spending money on roads and other developmental activity. "What is important is getting to Srinagar," he declares.

The old road to Srinagar via Muzaffarabad ends about two kilometres from Chakothi. From here, Srinagar is about 120 kilometres away. The two armies are separated by a bridge over the Jhelum river which meanders through the hills separating the two sides.

Along the Neelam river in the Tithwal sector, the village of Chaliana overlooks an Indian Army picket down below. The Indian troops are seated in orderly lines receiving a lecture from an officer while those on sentry duty are glued to their binoculars. Occasionally, one can even hear the crackle of small arms fire.

It is not quite clear whose writ runs in

KASHMIR PROBLEM

A Less Bellicose Tack

ITHIN Pakistan there is a distinct change in attitudes on Kashmir: the war frenzy has given way to a more sober approach that stresses dialogue. Recently, in the National Assembly speaker after speaker cautioned against war, even while emphasising the need to support the Kashmiri people. The Pakistan Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Mohammad Hanif Khan, while stating that India can't suppress people by force, told INDIA TODAY: "We don't want a war,"

Pakistan's strategy now aims at internationalising the issue. The Kashmir problem was discussed during the visit last month of the French President François Mitterrand, and at a joint press conference with the French

too cautioned against war.

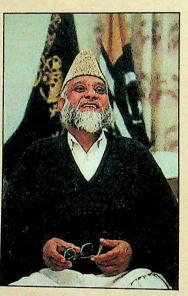
But in Pok, tempers were still running high. The leader of the Opposition in the POK Assembly. Major-General (Retd) Mohammad Hayat Khan (of the Tehrik-e-Amal party), said: "We should form a national revolutionary government in Azad Jammu & Kashmir to accelerate the Kashmir freedom movement." Despite their divergent stands, the JKLF Chairman Amanullah Khan and the President of the PPP in Occupied Kashmir, Sardar Mohammed Ibrahim, were also for a consensus revolutionary government.

Though most Pakistanis still claim to favour a solution as per the UN resolutions, there is an increasing desire to break the impasse. Says Sardar Oayyum: "The people of both sides of



leader, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said: "We are prepared to talk to India bilaterally in the spirit of the Shimla Agreement, talk to them in the UN. We don't think Kashmir should become an India-Pakistan problem, but we also feel that the problem for which Kashmiris are losing their lives should be recognised.'

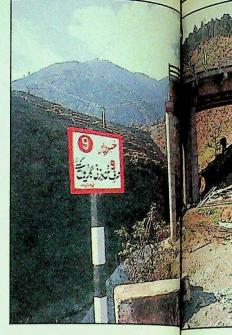
Tehrik-e-Istiqlal party chief Air Marshal (Retd) Asghar Khan was more straightforward: "People demanding war for liberating Kashmir are not its well-wishers." Newspapers



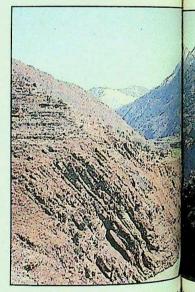
Benazir (left) and Sardar Qayyum

Kashmir should sit together and work out something. They could agree to go to India or Pakistan, or maintain a separate identity. Or they could agree to a condominium, which was suggested by Sheikh Abdullah but is unlikely to pacify people now."

Clearly, though the war-mongering has died down, a hue and cry over Kashmir will continue to be raised in Pakistan, and abroad, for some time to come. -KANWAR SANDHU in Islamabad

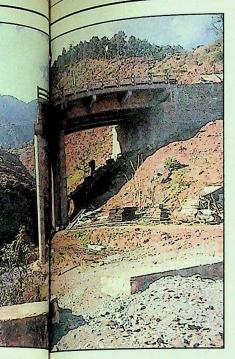


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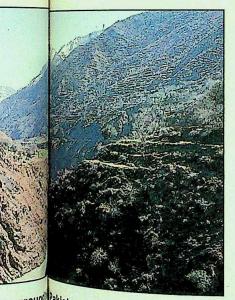


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When Qayyum is informed, he flies to a rage, censures the people responsiand gives permission for us to go back. stopped by a this time, the final clearance is given the all-powerful Inter Services Public dations (ISPR), headed by a serving hgadier, and an army captain is added to by the Direct ssor M. F or three-man escort team. him that we

The over-crowding of the political of the Preside adds to the confusion. The frenetic of the Press of adds to the confusion. The frenetic isquely interest activity is, in fact, largely the plethora of parties and KURBAN ALI KHAN

"Everyone has exploited us"

IN highly Islamised POK, it seems impossible to find someone who blames Pakistan as much as India for Kashmir's present plight and decrees religion to be a private affair. That is, till you meet Kurban Ali Khan, a Lincoln's Inn qualified barrister, in Mirpur town. Khan, who heads the People's National Party (PNP) in POK, spoke to Principal Correspondent KANWAR SANDHU. Excerpts:

Q. What is your party's stand on the Kashmir issue?

A. The PNP is for an independent Kashmir. Both India and Pakistan should withdraw their armies from Kashmir. The Kashmiris don't want to remain slaves of either country.

Q. What is the basis of complete independence?

Q. Do you think the Buddhists of Ladhakh or the Hindus of Jammu will go along with the call for independence of Kashmir?

A. It is not a religious issue. It is a struggle for independence of the Kashmiri people. We are opposed to giving a communal colour to it.

Q. How do you propose to go about achieving your objective?

A. Since we stay in this part (Pakistan), it has to be independent. Only then can we talk of liberating the part with India. First we have to educate people and then impart arms training.

Q. Do you hold India as a greater enemy or Pakistan?

A. Both are equal enemies. They have politically and economically exploited Kashmir. Whenever there was



A. Every community has a right to decide its future. The UN Charter provides that even the smallest race has a right to be independent.

Q. But can a land-locked state like Kashmir be viable?

A. That Kashmir can't be viable is a myth created by vested interests. It's the natives who make a place viable.

Q. It means like the JKLF you want an independent Kashmir?

A. JKLF is not clear what it wants. Sometimes it talks of independence, at other times of going with Pakistan.

a movement in Pakistan, it was quelled. And now we find India doing the same. Though our brethren in Kashmir have arisen now, they are not clear as to what they want.

Q. Which of the two countries has done more for the Kashmiris' welfare?

A. Neither has developed any part of Kashmir. Only some roads have been built to facilitate troop movements. Here, agriculture has been neglected and there is hardly any industry. In India occupied Kashmir, at least some industries have been established.

40 out of 51 Prize Winners

POLLON SPECIAL CHAIN

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15 Outright Wins! 25 placings!



STATISTICS	
Number of Rolon Chains used	40
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Number of Other Chains used	9

Motor Cycles events 100CC and above



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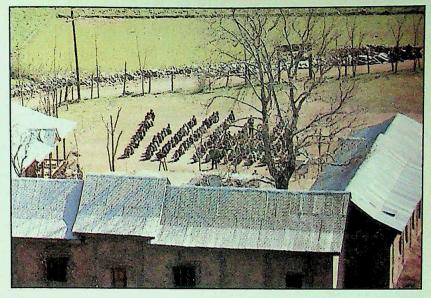
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fundamentalist groups all doing their own thing. In this rabidly communal own days are taken aback when at Mirpur we come across the members of the National Students Federation who are firm on the 'liberation' of Kashmir, but are against giving it a communal colour. There are currently 17 political parties and youth militant organisations in POK. The only unifying factor perhaps is the 'liberation' of Kashmir.

At Chaliana village, Aziz-ur-Rehman.member of the local union council, when asked which political party he belonged to, says that now they all belong to only one party—the party of Allah. "The politics of the party is over now," he adds.

The emotional frenzy caused by the current situation in Kashmir has even brought to the fore the women of POK from behind the purdah. Throughout our visit, we see very few women and



The sight of Indian troops is a perpetual provocation

IEREMIAH ENRIGHT

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"I could sense trouble"

THE head of the 40-man UN Military Observer group for India and Pakistan, Brigadier General Jeremiah Enright, spoke to Principal Correspondent KANWAR SANDHU on his role. Excerpts from the interview:

Q. How do you view the tension?

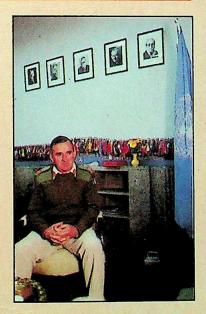
A. Six months ago, I could sense trouble fermenting in Srinagar. The tension reached a new high in December-January.

Q. Could you have imagined that people would try to cross over and that they would be fired upon?

A. I did not expect the violence. It is difficult to prevent people from crossing. It is an 800-km long border with people related by birth or marriage wanting to visit their relatives. I see no complication in that.

Q. After the Chakothi incident have you taken preventive steps?

A. We are always available for a good purpose. We have nine stations, five on the Pakistani side and four on the Indian. And in the summer months we have two more. It is a small effort considering the overall problem. We are basically observers. We only monitor what the two ar-



mies do but we cannot dictate to them. People's expectations are very high. How can one explain to them that it is a problem that has to be solved by the politicians.

O. What system do you follow when firing incidents take place?

A. We investigate the firing incidents. We are permitted to investigate them on this side, but not on the Indian side since 1972.

Q. Have the firing incidents been on the increase recently?

A. There was an increase in December-January. But the increase is not appreciable.

those we do get to meet refuse to be photographed or quoted. Recently. however, a women's organisation called Dukhtran-e-Millat-e-Kashmir (Daughters of a Kashmiri Nation), with Rabia Gilani as its president, has been formed in Muzaffarabad.

'Azad Kashmir' has an elected assembly which has the power to promulgate laws (the only exception is taxation which is decided by a 14-member council headed by the prime minister of Pakistan). Asin Jammu & Kashmir, non-Kashmiris cannot buy property in POK. All lower and middle level officers are from the Kashmir cadre, while the state police chief (IG rank) and the chief secretary of the state are on deputation from the Pakistan Government.

What is strikingly significant is that all local officials, whatever their rank, are part of the so-called 'freedom struggle'. Abdul Majeed Malik, chief justice of the 'Azad Kasmir' high court spends more time in POK addressing public meetings on the Kashmir issue than he does in dispensing justice.

But that is obviously a key element of his functioning, as it is for most of the administrative officials. After 10 days of travel through POK, the overriding impression is that 'Azad Kashmir' has suddenly awoken from the obscurity of the last 40 years.

Today, they are all soldiers in the holy war that has been launched to 'liberate' Kashmir, some armed with the fanaticism of Islam, others, more dangerously, with Kalashnikovs. The ultimate irony is that the provocation for that has not come from Islamabad, but from Srinagar and New Delhi.

OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA

In the Hot Seat

The Haryana Chief Minister may have rigged his own political future

ARELY three months ago, Om Prakash Chautala was laughing all the way to the vote bank. He'd achieved his long nurtured ambition of becoming top dog in Haryana, even if it was a blatant case of dynastic succession.

But in the space of just two bloody days that dropped a red smudge on the country's electoral history, all that changed dramatically. Today, the crown that once looked so secure, rests uneasy on his grizzled head. More important, in the wake of the mayhem in Meham, his very political survival is at stake.

For that he has only himself to blame.

Chautala, by personally leading hordes of gun-wielding hoodlums through the villages of Meham, was, in fact, rigging his own political future. The infamous Green Brigade had not just stuffed ballot boxes and captured booths but virtually destroyed a political career spanning 36 years. However, the Election Commission's (EC) decision to countermand the Meham by-election has provided him a respite and as his electoral rival, Anand Singh Dangi says, "given him a fresh lease of life'

Chautala can, now, opt not to recontest the Meham seat and his detractors

fear that he will shift to a safer cons ency—he has to contest by the May—even make a sitting MLA necessary. Chautala, however, is tal tough. "I will contest only from Me I am not one to leave the battlefe make others flee.'

At the Haryana Janata Dal won meet in Chandigarh on March 8, the minister spoke in similar language Prakash Chautala does not know meaning of the word defeat. Main ha jeet mein badalna janta hoon (I knowho convert defeat into victory)," he declar

Evidence of this over-confidents

DEVI LAL

"It is a capitalist conspiracy"

DEPUTY Prime Minister Devi Lal stoutly defended his son Om Prakash Chautala in a conversation with Senior Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA in Delhi's Haryana Bhawan. Excerpts:

Q. Why didn't you ask your son to step down?

A. Why should he resign? How is he to blame? A very big conspiracy had been hatched by Rajiv Gandhi, R.K. Dhawan, Bhajan Lal, the Birlas, the Goenkas and the Ambanis. They planned to destroy me. As long as I am around, there is no hope for them. A rural, mass-based leader like me is a threat to the capitalists who don't have a single representative in Parliament. Out of the 141 Janata Dal MPs, 106 are from rural seats. These people are scared because I'm pressing for an upper limit for land holdings.

Q. Senior members of your party were in favour of Chautala resigning. But despite being number two in a government committed to value-based politics, you have been defending him.

A. I am V.P. Singh's biggest supporter. The game is to weaken me and thus weaken Singh. The capitalists are using me and my son to gun for Singh. If I don't save Singh, who do you think will? Arun Nehru, Mufti or that man, George Fernandes, who has such a long name?

Q. Your conspiracy argument was shot down at the Political Affairs Committee meeting. And you quietened down after you were told there was photographic evidence of Chautala's involvement in the rigging.

A. I did not surrender to Mrs Gandhi. Who is anybody else?

Q. Did you threaten to resign if Chautala was asked to step down?

A. This is wrong. I did suggest that the Assembly be dissolved, but then my own party said it was not fair to trouble the people of Haryana by putting the state to the polls again.

O. Senior BJP leaders, L.K. Advani and Atal Behari Vajpayee, have demanded Chautala's resignation.

A. They were influenced by newspaper reports. Vajpayee issued the statement from Shimla and Advani from Bhopal.

Q. What if the BJP withdraws its support to the Haryana Government?

A. So what if they withdraw. I am not a coward that I'll be pressured. I don't see why such a big noise is being made about Meham. Why is nobody talking of Bihar where 80 people were killed in poll violence? This points to the fact that there is a conspiracy.

O. Your younger son, Ranjit Singl resigned from the Cabinet.

A. He was in league with the corspirators and was meeting Dhawanan the lot. He thought he'd become chie minister.

O. You have been accused of parpetuating dynastic rule. In the recent held assembly elections, you forced: ticket for Chautala's son, Ajay Sing! in Rajasthan.

A. It was given on popular deman not on my saying. All those I gai tickets to have won. It was Nathu Re Mirdha's son who contested and los Why is no one levelling a similar charg against Mirdha?



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Violence in Meham: dark chapter



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Iwill contest only from Meham"

IN the aftermath of Meham, Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala is fighting for his political survival. An anxious-looking Chautala spoke to Senior Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA at his bungalow in Chandigarh. Excerpts:

Q. Now that it is not necessary for you to contest from Meham, will you choose a safer constituency?

A. I will contest only from Meham. Om Prakash Chautala does not run away from the battlefield, he makes others flee. Even this time I would have won by at least 25,000 votes.

Q. But what about reports that the poll was rigged?

A. The Election Commission (EC) is responsible for the violence. The polling passed off peacefully on February 27. But the Ec's central observer, Ranjen. recommended a repoll in eight booths. He should be held responsible. Why should a repoll have been held when there were no complaints.

Q. But the media reported rigging by the Green Brigade on February 27.

A. This is nonsense. The press is a party to the conspiracy-hatched by capitalists, the Congress(I) and some of our partymen—to defame me and Devi Lal. The press is universally anti-Jat.

Q. You are blaming Anand Singh Dangi's supporters for violence in Bainsi, when it was your son, Abhay Singh, who led a group of riggers.

A. Let the EC open the Bainsi ballotbox. If there is even one ballot paper with a stamp on the wheel, I'll resign. Abhay did not go to Bainsi on the 28th. He did tour the constituency on the 27th. And why shouldn't he? He was only helping his father.

Q. Why don't you resign, if only to improve your image?

A. Why should I help the conspirators? Forty-four of the 49 legislators are with me. The people are on my side. Why should I resign just because some drawing-room politicians are making this demand?

Q. The BJP and some Janata Dal leaders want you to resign.

A. Their demand is based on newspaper reports, which are baseless.

O. Your brother Ranjit Singh has resigned from the Cabinet in protest.

A. Ranjit resigned in the hope that he would become the chief minister.

O. Would you consider taking back Ranjit and the other ministers?

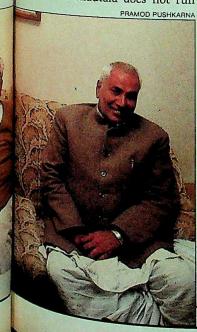
A. The question does not arise. In fact, I am contemplating disciplinary action against them.

Q. You have embarrassed the Government at the Centre by becoming a blot on their commitment to valuebased politics.

A. I am a soldier of the party and consider it my duty to do as the prime minister says. If his or the party's image is getting spoilt, my resignation is a very small thing. I am ready to even lay down my life for the party.

Q. Are you considering fresh polls to the Assembly to clear yourself?

A. Why should I do that? I've been to every village of Harvana more than once and know that the people are with me. Now that the black sheep have left the Cabinet, I can give the state a good and clean administration, and concentrate on Haryana's development.



was available in ample abundance in Meham on February 27 and 28 when his supporters led by son, Abhay Singh, and aided and abetted by senior DIGS and sps went from booth to booth, intimidating often scaring voters. Dangi's polling agents. In a clumsy bid to mislead the presiding officers and the press, they pretended to be Dangi's supporters, screaming "Dangi ko jitayenge (We'll make Dangi win).

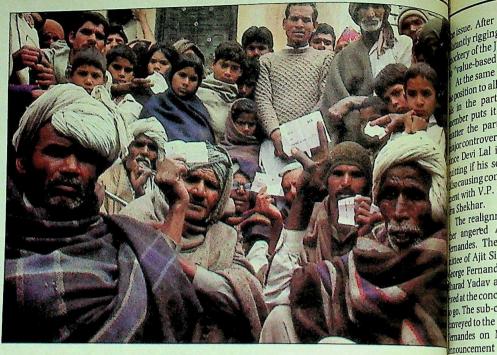
They, however, made less of an effort to hide the ballot papers on which they furiously stamped the Janata Dal symbol. Says Kitab Singh Malik, former Lok Dal MLA: "The DIG had the audacity to admit that they indulged in large-scale rigging to keep the Tau's izzat.'

But it is the Tau's honour that is more seriously at stake. Devi Lal, Chautala's father and deputy prime minister, came under heavy attack at the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) meeting of the Janata Dal, where more time was spent on discussing Meham than on the formation of state governments.

A vocal lobby comprising Ajit Singh, George Fernandes, Madhu Dandavate and Nathu Ram Mirdha was insistent that

Chautala must be asked to step down. "The Janata Dal victory started from Haryana, let our defeat not begin from there," a senior minister remarked. Typically, Devi Lal, the lone supporter of his son, held forth on how the Birlas, Goenkas and Ambani-owned papers had hatched a conspiracy to mar his image and that of the Government. "They are using me to gun for V.P. Singh," he later told INDIA TODAY (see interview).

The prime minister. however, has been maintaining a pregnant silence. But with the BJP, a supporter of the Central and Haryana Governments, resolute in its stand that Chautala must resign, he cannot avoid





Meham voters who were prevented from voting (ab) ection, Ajit Sir Abhay Singh (left); and Dangi with Abhay Singh'sia rime minister s

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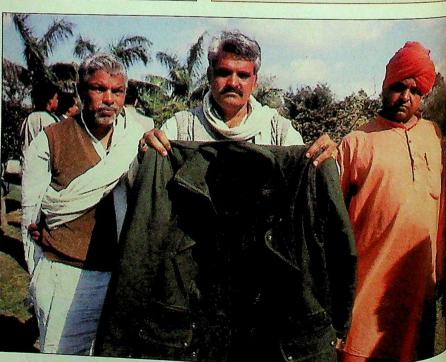
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Devi Lal, V.P.

Chandra Shel

Abhay Singh and his men with the help of the police captured booths and in a clumsy cover-up bid shouted pro-Dangi slogans.



After all, Chautala's action in andy rigging the by-election makes a randy 1166 Inata Dal's commitment

value-based politics". At the same time, the Janata Dal is in position to allow any internal upheavin the party. As a senior cabinet ober puts it: "V.P.Singh or for that the party, can hardly afford a iorcontroversy at this stage. Especially ace Devi Lal issued a veiled threat of iting if his son were to be touched." socausing concern is Devi Lal's realignwith V.P. Singh's bete noire, Chan-

The realignment, however, has furr angered Ajit Singh and George mandes. The five-member sub-comlite of Ajit Singh, Madhu Dandavate, orge Fernandes, Yashwant Sinha and harad Yadav at a separate meeting arindat the conclusion that Chautala had 180. The sub-committee's decision was nveyed to the prime minister by George mandes on March 3. After the EC's mouncement of countermanding the m voting (about ction, Ajit Singh shot off a letter to the nay Singh's jar rime minister seeking action on the submmittee's decision.

Pressure has mounted with the Haryna PCC(I) chief Shamsher Singh Surjerala submitting a memorandum to the ime minister describing Chautala as man responsible for the "massacre innocent people" and demanding that bautala be dismissed and debarred from

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Peri Lal, V.P. Singh, Mufti Sayeed and Chandra Shekhar after PAC meeting

contesting elections for the next six years. "Chautala, his son Abhay Singh, and senior police officers should be prosecuted," he declared.

S the demand for Chautala's resignation gains ground, the man in the hot seat is busy trying to contain the damage. In a hurriedly called meeting of the state Janata Dal MLAs, he got 44 legislators to "repose" their faith in him.

But this can prove illusory. A majority of them owe allegiance to Chautala's brother and now arch rival Ranjit Singh. whom Devi Lal and Chautala have accused of being behind the "conspiracy". After his resignation from the Cabinet as agriculture minister, Ranjit Singh has been camping in former President Giani Zail Singh's residence in New Delhi. "I have explained my position to V.P. Singh. I cannot be in the same Government as he who favours criminalisation of politics," says Ranjit Singh.

The commission while countermanding the Meham poll has directed the Haryana Government to order an inquiry into the role of the police and the failure of the official machinery in conducting a free and fair poll in Meham.

But ironically, the same police officers who openly aided Abhay Singh in capturing booths are now seething with anger. They feel, understandably, that they will be made the scapegoats. The police is what Chautala needs to worry about more than the possibility of legislators deserting him. A murder case has been registered against Abhay Singh and Chautala needs police help to bail him out.

The lower ranks are already in a state of revolt. A senior policeman reportedly forced Harbans Singh, a constable, to switch clothes with Abhay Singh at the height of the Meham violence. Abhay Singh had sought shelter in a school building in village Bainsi, when Dangi supporters had chased him out of booth number 26 which he was trying to rig on February 28, the day of the repoll. Harbans Singh was lynched by Dangi's supporters in the belief that he was Abhay Singh. The lower ranks, especially the recruits of the Karnal police training centre, are now up in arms.

Chautala has also made a powerful enemy in Dangi, his electoral rival in Meham. "We will now chase Chautala

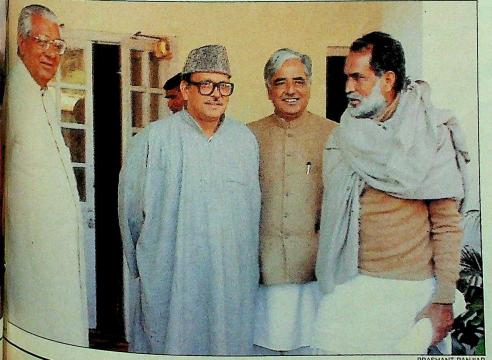
not only out of Meham. but beyond the boundaries of Haryana," says an irate Dangi who has emerged as the hero who took on the son of the deputy prime minister.

Once a close confidant of Devi Lal and his chief election manager, Dangi has the backing of the powerful Chaubisi (the 24 panchayat body) in Meham which has pledged him its support. In a Jatdominated constituency like Meham (Jats command 90,000 of the 1.50 lakh votes), that is bad news for Chautala.

Moreover, if, as he boldly claims, he will contest again from Meham, Chautala is almost certain to lose the election. The loss, moreover, will also be a serious blow to Devi Lal's stature and standing in the Government as well as the state. But whichever way the electoral dice falls, the question mark over Om Prakash Chautala's political future will remain.

> HARINDER BAWEIA in Meham and Chandigarh

The five-member sub-committee has recommended that Chautala should quit. For V.P. Singh, that poses a painful dilemma.



L.K. ADVANI

Saffron Seer

The soft-spoken, hardliner bursts into the national limelight

70U'VE seen him somewhere. No. not in some shady recess of the mind. But in some mundane everyday place. And now, come to think of it, here heis. Bang in the middle of Laxman's daily cartoon, the bristle-brush moustached little common man peeping at the political

world in bemused befuddlement. Blow him up poster-size and he bears an uncanny resemblance to Lal Krishan Advani. In life, Advani sports not only the moustache but also the quizzical countenance of the little old fellow. A quintessential everyday Indian middle classness.

awone," says Easy to identify with. A sort of essertials a memb symaptico mass appeal. But there incutive Cour resemblance ends. And the enigmass for with a sp. Confused, Advani is not. In fact, company of the confused that his not. In fact, company of the confused that his not.

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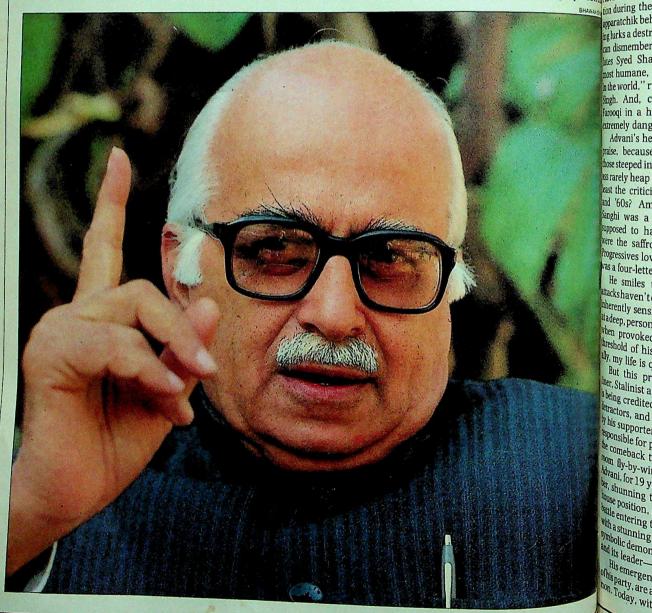
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dimension that has run traditional adultional sularists and patriots like the old line grallists, Congress Fabians, and commuadallist to defensive positions. indeverybody, including his own partygen, tries to find the right phrases to sum pile essence of the 62-year-old former water and late-starting politician to has latterly blossomed into the most pominent and effective ideologue and grategist of the BJP.

elight

"Arare gentleman in politics, if I ever gwone," says journalist J. Dubashi, who A sort of escape a member of the party's National l. But ther fixutive Council. "A softspoken hardthe enigmass with a spotless character—a rare not. In fact the modity in our social and political clarity of the concedes Finance Minister Madhu ction haves pandavate who spent time in jail with d propelled it dayani during his 19-month incarcera-BHAMASS ION during the Emergency. "A Stalinist moaratchik behind whose liberal posturing lurks a destructive Hindu fanatic who an dismember this country," expostu-lies Syed Shahabuddin. "Among the gost humane, liberal leaders anywhere ithe world," ruminates BJP MP Jaswant ingh. And, concludes CPI leader M. faroogi in a huff: "A man playing an attemely dangerous game of politics."

Advani's heard it all. Well, if not the raise, because BJP leaders, especially hose steeped in the monastic ways of the warely heap praise on one another, at east the criticism. Remember the '50s nd '60s? Among intellectuals, Jana anghi was a dirty word. They were supposed to have killed Gandhi. They nere the saffron-capped obscurantists. hogressives loved to hate them. Advani ras a four-letter word.

He smiles through this now. The ttackshaven't quite ceased, and being an aherently sensitive man, they hurt him aladeep, personal level. He says of himself then provoked beyond the resistance hreshold of his innate shyness: "Actully, my life is quite prosaic.'

But this prosaic, softspoken, hardar, Stalinist apparatchik of a humanist being credited, with trepidation by his stactors, and with unbridled euphoria his supporters, as the man singularly sponsible for propelling his party down comeback trail. And his is no backbon fly-by-wire operation. This time, dvani, for 19 years a Rajya Sabha mems, shunning the sinecure of his upper Suse position, came into the heat of the the Lok Sabha from Delhi thastunning plurality of votes. It was a ymbolic demonstration that the party ad its leader—were busting loose.

his emergence, and the re-emergence ohis party, are a simultaneous phenomenon Today, with the BJP's 86 Lok Sabha

THE THOUGHTS OF PRESIDENT ADVANI

66

Where the media can flaunt the law against the highest executive authority they really can be deemed to be free.

A democrat welcomes trenchant criticism as essential for a healthy democracy. A fascist regards this as a threat.

Why should the Government be running hotels? Why should private enterprise not enter the airlines field?

Partition was a mistake. It benefited neither country. We should visualise a new confederation of Pakistan and India.

The Hindu belief is essentially secular. It strives for harmony. It is because we are a Hindu nation that we are secular.

seats. Advani is recognised as a vital prop of the trilateral arrangement on which the National Front Government survives. And he dines, along with the CPI(M)'s Harkishen Singh Surjit, with Prime Minister V.P. Singh once a week to discuss government strategies. And following the recent assembly elections (see accompanying story) his party, as an independent ideological entity, boasts three powerful chief ministers, and plays the role of supportive kingmaker in other key states.

Says K.L. Sharma of the post-1984 BIP blues when the party secured just two miserable seats in Parliament: "There's no question about it. We were shaken, shattered and demoralised. There was a widespread though mistaken assumption fanned by Congress and the communists that our cadres had deserted us and that we were a spent force." Atal Behari Vajpayee was then party president and Advani, general secretary. And during the endless post-mortems Advani arrogated to himself the role of demonstrating the power of the positive thinker.

'There was no real difference in approach," Advani recalls. "Yes, we had taken a bashing. And after you're defeated, anything is believable because nothing fails like failure." But as Advani surveyed the wreckage of the political battlefield he saw much that gave hope for rejuvenation. As a compulsive microanalyst and amateur psephologist he saw it as his first task to convince the party that its showing wasn't all that bad. It had received 7.5 per cent of the popular vote, the largest chunk of the total opposition bag. "Elections under our system are a gamble," he says, "in which a small swing creates legislative majorities.'

And it appeared to him inconsistent with reality that "we were nowhere" while, in the past four years, a regional party like the TDP could capture 33 seats, and the Janata Party, AGP, Lok Dal could make major gains in various states.

Not one to be mired in the morass of self pity and auto-flagellation that some party stalwarts were engaged in, Advani convinced Vajpayee to appoint a working group under Sharma-minus senior party leaders-to work out a five-year action plan for a top to bottom revivification of the party and its cadres, and to prepare a report that was to be unsparing in its criticism of its leadership.

In 1986, in the second year of this plan, Advani took over the party presidentship from Vajpayee. There is no major ideological difference between the two. There was no power struggle. The party is far too disciplined for that.

In a sense, Advani was destined to emerge because of certain inherent

faculties and experience he possesses. He was barely 15 when he joined an RSS shakha in Hyderabad, Sind, and after Partition he went on to become a full-time pracharak (activist) in Rajasthan, "an experience that for the first time gave me a sense of commitment to a world outside myself". He entered active politics through the Jana Sangh in 1951 with a batch of RSS recruits, including Vajpayee. In 1973 he was elected Jana Sangh president, remaining in that post until 1977. He was also chairman of the Delhi metropolitan council between 1967 and 1970.

By profession, he still likes to call himselfa journalist rather than politician, and describes as some of the best time of his life the period in the '60s when he did some prolific writing for the Organiser.

And this wide-ranging experience he has combined with a quiet but compelling magnetism of personality. As Nanaji Deshmukh says: "He has never been a self-promoter. He studies problems in great depth. His expression is precise. exact, and never ambivalent. He does not know how to deceive or dodge. And once he's convinced of the path to take, he can never be deflected." Adds Kidar Nath Sahni: "He is one of the few people I know whose private positions never differ from his public utterances. And his powers of persuasion are phenomenal." The party

needed a cheerleader and a tireless organisation man. Advani fit the bill.

Vajpayee, undoubtedly enjoyed the image of an orator, a mass image, a man with a vision, also someone opponents could easily accept as a liberal. A man of high emotion whose poetic torrents and force of language just carried people away with him. "But after he'd spoken, you'd tend to forget what he said," according to a senior partyman. "But with Advani, the important elements sink in because of the power of his logic, his wit."

7 AJPAYEE has charisma. Yet, his personality somehow falls short of jelling with the psychic associations that motivate RSS and BJP workers. They're used to characters like Khushabahu Thakre, the powerful Madhya Pradesh chieftain whose sartorial collection consists of three dhotis. "Any time you walk into his room he's washing a dhoti, and hanging it out to dry. You would never know that he's a kingmaker in a major Indian state," says Dubashi. Or Rajasthan kingmaker Sunder Singh Bhandari who lives in Gandhian resplendence in one room.

Advani after winning the New Delhi seat; and (below) with Vajpayee:

Advani, though not consciously has that certain anti-yuppie appeal not spartan, but is still redolent of shakha. You can walk into his officeur nounced. He himself answers his pho Says Kidar Nath Sahni: "He never plays any hang-ups about power."

The BJP-RSS

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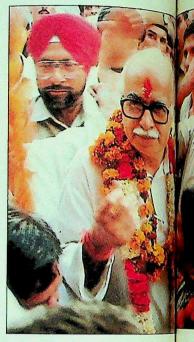
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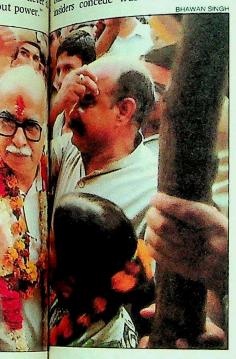
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The BIP-RSS worker celebrates sobri-For better or for worse, the aggresof to the aggres-grely no-apologies-pro-Hindu ideologippie appeal p assance is now solidly identified with redolent of dvanl. Vajpayee's tone, his accepting hame for the split of the Janata Party, noiders concede was somewhat of a



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damper. And yet they complement one another. Like Vajpayee's, Advani's life has been spotless. And even his detractors readily concede that he has never been bown to ask for a favour. He has chalked up not a single 100, a trait essential for resolute, pathfinding leadership. Consciously, he undersells his personality.

The вјр's back-to-the-roots campaign was an unabashed nurturing of Hindu pide, and if the "pseudo-secularists," as be dubbed his critics, condemned this as political totalitarianism, well, that was heir problem.

Perhaps Advani's special place in the Patheon of the BJP leadership lies in his being able to develop a viable line of logic with which he can argue convincingly hat his is a nationalist stand while that of opponents is communal. His "positive scularism" proclaims that support for and the refusal to enact a theat it is a separatist stand, a theat into "minorityism" while his landis nationalist. In promoting Urdu as wond language, he tells his foes, you're tying to appease but 7 per cent of the population and thereby using Muslims as apolitical instrument. And he insists that Recewisk out of Punjab made Pacewith the BJP, Muslims will have to do the BJP, Muslims will nave to be exploited by the

Congress(I), communists and Janata Dal.

On the Ram Janmabhoomi issue he pitches his case differently. "Can anyone declare the Kaba Mosque or the Jama Masjid a national monument?" he asks. The Ram Janmabhoomi movement, he says, had a life and propulsion of its own with or without the BJP; better with the вјр or the country runs the risk of it falling into the hands of forces committed to anti-secular violence. To his opponents, he says: "You may well say that Hindu bashing, or denigrating the moral and spiritual force of the essential liberalism of Hinduism as an allergy, is secularism. But I hold that equating Ram Janmabhoomi with the Babri Masjid is equating Ram with Babar."

HERE is little doubt that during the critical period between 1986 and 1989, when other national parties were trying to marginalise or isolate the вјр-and perhaps, precisely because the BJP was being pushed into the slipstream of national politics-that Advani succeeded in promoting a distinct personality for his party. A common phrase among BJP supporters was "ab party ki alag pahchaan ho gayee hai". (Now the party has a distinct image.) More importantly, he saw to it that it did not retreat into a shell.

And in this regard, if Advani had

Advani harps on 'minorityism' and 'pampering'. When Muslims get slaughtered in Meerut, is that minorityism? When they are butchered in Bhagalpur, is that pampering?"

SYED SHAHABUDDIN

I may not agree with some of his views, but I can say that even on issues on which we differ I find his exposition and interpretation very persuasive and sharp."

MADHU DANDAVATE

begun to blossom as an ideologue, organisation man, and mass campaigner, the last year also saw him emerge as a political strategist of considerable consequence. A strategist whose perception of the political balance of power has contributed to changing the shape of national politics.

Traditionally, BJP's primacy had been in Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and in some urban pockets like Jammu. But Advani convinced the leadership that if the party is to survive it must be pulled out of its pocket-boroughs.

His immediate plan was for a flat-out effort in Gujarat and Maharashtra, even if it meant an alliance with the devil itselfthe Shiv Sena. Advani admits he never felt comfortable sitting on the same platform as Bal Thackeray "as the Shiv Sena represented some rabid elements". Important BJP leaders like Vajpayee, K.R. Malkani and Jaswant Singh opposed this alliance. But Advani argued that if in the past, socialists and Congress could make a truce with the Sena to destroy communist trade unions in Bombay, when it was a regional chauvinistic group, there was no reason to shun it now just because it had proclaimed Hindutva as its aim. Besides, the Sena could be drawn into the national mainstream for a still more exalted aimthe defeat of Rajiv Gandhi.

But Advani was also thinking electoral strategy. Maharashtra, after all, was the biggest state after Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. If the BJP and its allies scored impressive victories in Gujarat and Maharashtra (Madhya Pradesh already seemed to be in the bag), it would create a situation in which opposition parties would need the BJP in order to consolidate a victory over the Congress(I). The idea was to create conditions in which the Janata Dal would have to concede seats to the BJP in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and thereby ensure the party's presence in those states as well.

There was a longer-term logic in all this. Advani had calculated that the two main cards up the opposition sleeve—the Hindu card of which the BJP was the beneficiary, and the anti-Rajiv card, of which V.P. Singh was the gainer-were not sufficient to topple the Congress(I) regime. The third, and most essential card for the Lok Sabha elections, was the trump-card of opposition unity.

During the last two years Advani was blunt and to the point with V.P. Singh. The exercise was to convince Singh that if he excluded the BJP from seat adjustments for the sake of pandering to the communists in the hope of attracting minority support, he would not win. In fact he told Singh pointedly: "If you decide against seat adjustments with us, our rank and

file will heave a sigh of relief. Our desire to reach seat adjustments with you is not the decision of the rank and file nor even that of a unanimous leadership but a consensus. The decision is not necessarily for my party's good but to achieve the higher objective of ousting Rajiv Gandhi."

In a very real sense, the trilateral alliance on which the new Government is based is as much a brainchild of Advani as of V.P. Singh. And it is another testament to the remarkable consistency of Advani's position that his desire to safeguard his party's distinct identity has remained paramount. None of his public positions on Article 370 or the Uniform Civil Code have changed and he has kept his party out of the Government notwithstanding internal pressures to participate. And he

has stuck to his position that the BJP, as a matter of principle, will have no truck with the communists anywhere.

IS attitude towards V.P. Singh and Janata Dal continues to be Vive la difference! And Advani is determined to resist pressures that would in any way destabilise the Government. No idol worshipper himself, and with the same doubts with which he shared the dais with the Shiv Sena, Advani participated in a shila puja in Delhi, to reiterate his support for the VHP. Yet, when the controversy over construction of the temple resurfaced in February and threatened to plunge the Government into a crisis, Advani, at V.P. Singh's personal request, played a key role in persuading the religious organisations to defer it in the national interest.

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Advani, the gen ag or unable to All who know him testify that on an issue Advani will insist on subordinaling seems the partisan to the national interest. The grever and rec is instinctual with him—an indelible it in the potential t mind-set. And this is but one of a formit he combination of attributes that ble combination of attributes that have political lifestrea served, to forge Advani's emergence ing Scindia-Josh the compleat leader. The discipline of the power structure with the new found activity the power structure. RSS with the new-found activism of the tumar Malhotr BJP. Ideologue. Razor-sharp articulation ladan Lal Khu Organisation man. A voracious reade and they have Rank and file activist. Political games organisational a man. Media handler. ir themselves

But this clarity of vision does on galasthan, Guja necessarily percolate through the Bri Advanitried bu leadership, and many insiders believethe ich candidate: unless Advani handles some funda mental organisational problems with the is chieftains, a same toughness and thoroughness with loshi-Patwa tus which he handles national issues there have also begun could be trouble ahead.

The party's recent success was caux eral states local for euphoria, but Advani's lack of fire roords. And, as ness in dealing with some of the vestel interests that have a stranglehold overtie party at various state levels may cause serious damage to its future growth and trubts about A performance. For one thing, bossism i rader who insp the party, reminiscent of the Congressant but also fear in m the communists has prevented the a hemselves more commodation and promotion of younge power, would th leaders who emerged as committed actir the maximum 1 ists during the Emergency. This is because dart pogroms the state units are still controlled an herecan be littl manipulated by the same leaders while misplaced per joined the Jana Sangh some 30 years and carries neg

(Clockwise from below) With his family; with former President Radhakrishnan; and at an RSS meet







thrani, the gentleman, has been unwillfy that on a subordinary in Himachal Pradesh, Shants subordination (50. in think to be calling the shots interest and reducing contenders with former and reducing contenders with red potential to nonentities. In Madhya l interest. Th n indelible i то new blood can enter the вје's phical lifestream because of the controle of a formid ites that have Scindia-Joshi-Patwa troika. In Delhi, emergence a becower structure dominated by Vijay scipline of the ctivism of the formar Malhotra, Kidar Nath Sahni and ladan Lal Khurana seems changeless, articulation acious read and they have been able to grab aganisational as well as legislative posts litical games ir themselves or their supporters. In Rajashan, Gujarat and Maharashtra too, ion does at drani tried but failed to obtain seats for ugh the BRI

ers believeth candidates. And as the party senses power some of lems with the is chieftains, as witness the unseemly ughness with light-Patwa tussle in Madhya Pradesh, ll issues ther have also begun to show opportunistic, u-BJP-like behaviour. Moreover, in sevess was caux gal states local BJP leaders have tainted lack of fire mords. And, as Shahabuddin points out, of the vester criminals were given tickets by the

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President ommunal violence that has so relentin RSS meet BHAWAN SINGH

lessly bloodied the Indian landscape, radical Hindu groups, owing nominal allegiance to the BJP, or even BJP activists themselves have often been identified as the perpetrators.

DVANI, however, is the last to deny the existence of rabid and violent Hindu militants. But he says this is a backlash against Hindu-bashing and pseudo-secularism and can only be controlled through a party like the BJP which is able to point people in the direction of true, non-violent Hindu secularism.

Editor K.R. Malkani dismisses as "hogwash!" the critics who insist that the BJP is a fanatical group. "Our essence is tolerance. We do not want a Hindu rashtra or a theocratic state. But we revel

Inlike Vajpayee, he is not very open. On the occasions I met him he avoided talking. He seems to be an introvert. He is a hardened RSS cadre."

M. FAROOQI

Lrue, the BIP under his leadership has grown. By pursuing the Hindu fundamentalist line, the party feels it will grow into a major national alternative." VASANT SATHE

Le never thrust anything, religion, Hinduism, any ideology down our throats. Just books. Science books, books about animals. That's because he loves reading. PRATIBHA ADVANI

in the essence of Hinduism that keeps us anchored to our roots as we modernise so we don't lose ourselves in a tidal wave of westernisation."

Advani, in his personal life, is far from religious or even ritualistic. His home does not even have a puja room. He is a vegetarian, not out of any religious fetish-in fact, he says: "I can quote the scriptures to show that both Rama and Krishna ate meat"—but because he does not like it. Buthis son Jayant and daughter Pratibha eat meat, and his wife, Kamala, a vegetarian. "cooks an excellent meat dish".

Pratibha, recently married to Kailash Thadani, lobby manager of the Oberoi Hotel in Calcutta, says: "He never thrust anything, religion, Hinduism, any ideology down our throats. Just books. Science books, books about animals. That's because he loves reading. And he loves watching English movies. One of his favourites is My Fair Lady.'

A product of Christian schooling-Advani was taught by Irish fathers at St. Patricks in Karachi where his family owned a successful department store before Partition—he grew up reading Jefferson, Voltaire, Jules Verne, Dumas, Hugo. He also studied Mein Kampf. In fact some of the most incisive, and trenchant liberal analysis and denunciation of fascism and dictatorship by an Indian is to be found in Advani's A Prisoner's Scrapbook, his jail diary compiled when he was imprisoned

during the Emergency.

And of all things, one book that influenced him was Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People. One person he won as a friend-whether or not he was able to influence him is another matter-was Dandavate, his prisonmate. Dandavate recalls: "It was only in jail that I discovered that he had a sense of humour. For me this is a common area of agreement because I could not have survived in jail without laughter. He told us the story of a professor of English who one day returned home to find that his daughter had eloped leaving a note for him: 'I am in love with our chauffeur and runing away with him.' Like his wife the professor got worried. But for a different reason. Said he: 'I am a professor of English and my daughter misspelt running." He would use this anecdote in the context of many political commentaries in which non-essential aspects are emphasised to the neglect of the essential.'

What then, is Advani's or his party's larger vision? Undoubtedly, Advani has been able to bring his party into the mainstream and given its Hindu foundation better intellectual acceptability than before and broadened the base of its

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apport. But is it just a liberal Hindu support is alternative to occidental secularism?

Says Jaswant Singh: "If you're looking for Lal Krishan Advani, you will not ing in the local state of the lo like 'right wing,' fundamentalist'. The last is self-contradctory because the Hinduism that inspireshim is totally iconoclastic, ready to challenge and closely question every handed-down verity." There's a conveplent laziness of mind, he says, that refuses to see the BJP's progressive platform-strict procedures for crimes against women, food for work, the right to work, rehabilitation of landless labour-"that would do a Jyoti Basu proud".

But beyond this, he notes, Advani represents a stream of thinking ready to challenge the very foundations of whether on ideology Nehruvian centralised planning, economic controls, linguistic states and "ill-defined" concepts of secularism. "When such gales of change are sweeping Europe and the Soviet Union, we are ready to debunk the shibboleths that have misguided our post-Independence destiny," he says.

Andon these matters, Advani speaks with a rare clarity for an Indian politician. On economic controls: drastic liberalisation, an end to licences and permits. On FERA: must radically dilute the provision. On the "Commanding Heights" of the economy: the Government must climb down. On the public sector: the Government has no business nunning hotels, the private sector must be allowed to enter airline, telephone and utility services. On multinationals: no blind protectionism but limit their role in low-technology areas. On decentralisation: the states must be given more economic power and larger states like Uttar Pradesh can be administratively bifurcated.

But these are aspects of Advani and the BJP that the public, perhaps because of a laziness of mind, perhaps because Party leaders have been too busy articuating Hindu issues, does not seem to gasp too easily. But they are vital aspects because they, too, establish an lonoclastic difference about the party. And in the coming years Advani's continuing challenge will be to demonstrate that his party, in every sense—programmes and policies—is truly the indigenous national alternative to the Years of poitical, social and spiritual that have characterised the politics of this nation. Then only, perhaps, will a hundred lotuses bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend.

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—INDERJIT BADHWAR

BHARATIYA JANATA PARTY

Emerging Power

The rightist party is seen as the alternative

AFFRON is no longer the colour of renunciation but that of reassertion. And it could well begin to overshadow all the other hues of the Indian spectrum. After languishing for long on the fringes of the right, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with a tally of 86 Lok Sabha and 556 assembly seats, has now arrived on the centre stage of Indian politics with a bang.

The real significance of the party's success lies in the fact that it is now being viewed as an alternative to the centrist parties that have so far had a monopoly on power. From a situation where the Congress(I)'s main plank was the absence of any viable alternative, the electorate suddenly has many more options. For should the conflicting ambitions of the Janata Dal leaders unleash a repeat of the internecine feud of the 1977-79 Janata phase, the Congress(I) is just waiting in the wings to take over. And if that party too should disintegrate in the absence of a capable leadership, the BJP is being seen by many as the alternative.

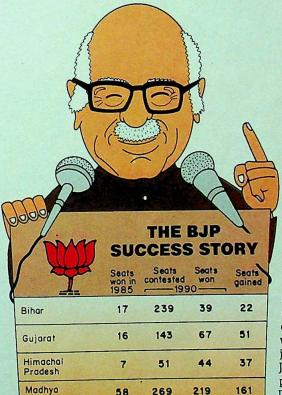
By now, the BJP leadership has made it clear that it will make a bid for power at the Centre during the next general elections. And it has good reason to be so confident. The February assembly polls saw the BJP win almost every second seat

> cess rate is much higher that of than the Congress(I) and Janata Dal. While the Congress(I)—the ruling party in all the states that went to the pollsbagged 417 of the 1,559 seats it contested, the BJP won 498 though it put up candidates in a little over 1,000 seats. Compared to the two parties' positions after the 1985 assembly polls, the BJP made an impressive gain of seats while the Congress(I) lost a staggering 664 seats. Moreover, for the first time, the BIP has formed governments in Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh on its own while in Rajasthan and Gujaratitis in coalition with the Janata Dal. Besides, its support is crucial for the Janata Dal Government in Bihar.

it contested, with the re-

sult that the party's suc-

Having already emerged as a force to reckon with in the north and west, the results of the recent polls reveal that the party has also made inroads into the east. In Bihar, it got 39 seats and in Orissa it won two seats despite a complete Janata Dal wave. In the Marxist bastion of West Bengal, its share of popular votes



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Chart by B.K. SHARMA

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also registered a significant increase in the November general elections. And should the BJP's newly installed state governments manage to function smoothly, its appeal as an alternative will be enhanced.

As a cadre-based party guided by a distinct ideology, the BJP has certain inbuilt advantages. It can work towards consolidating its electoral gains, and does not necessarily have to depend on waves and winds every time it faces an election. Can the BJP then explode the myth that India can only be ruled by the centrists? It has always been said that this country is too plural to be ruled by a right-wing party and too traditional to accept the Left.

These are interesting questions to which there are no conclusive answers. But alarm bells have already been sounded in the centrist parties. Says (ongress(I) General Secretary Ghulam Nabi Azad: "The BJP's emergence has posed a threat more to the secular character of the Indian state and its democratic polity than to other political paties." And a senior Congressman like visualises, "disturbing fundamentalism as a reaction to the aggressive BJP postures."

In fact, once the electorate began sarching for an alternative, in many buts of the country, the Janata Dal often

(From left) Shanta Kumar, Shekhawat, Advani and Patwa: rich harvest

did not have the necessary organisational network to translate the strong anti-Congress(I) mood into votes. The party's organisation is virtually non-existent beyond the district level. And it is this vacuum that the BJP filled.

HAT made the party's win this time round even more impressive was the fact that the Hindu card had lost much of its potency. Weeks before the eight states went to the polls, the tempo on the Ayodhya issue had slowed. No shilanyas was taking place. Even the VHP had decided to postpone the temple construction for four months. In very simplistic terms, in the absence of shilanyas and yagnas, the assembly results in many of the states should have reversed the trend of voting for a party which professedly stands for the Hindu cause. But the converse happened. Says Advani: "Soon after the parliamentary elections there was a tendency to explain our success in terms of a Hindu resurgence. But Ram Janmabhoomi was not an issue in the assembly elections. The BIP has achieved this success because of its strong organisation and distinct identity.'

In Rajasthan and Gujarat, the tremendous response to V.P. Singh's assembly election campaign, was not reflected in the results. What was supposed to go solely to the Janata Dal from the Congress(I) vote-bank got divided instead between the Janata Dal and the BJP. Had the BJP done well in November on the strength of the Hindu card alone, its peformance in the assembly polls should have registered a slump. But instead, the BJP seems to have snatched away a chunk of the centrist constituency.

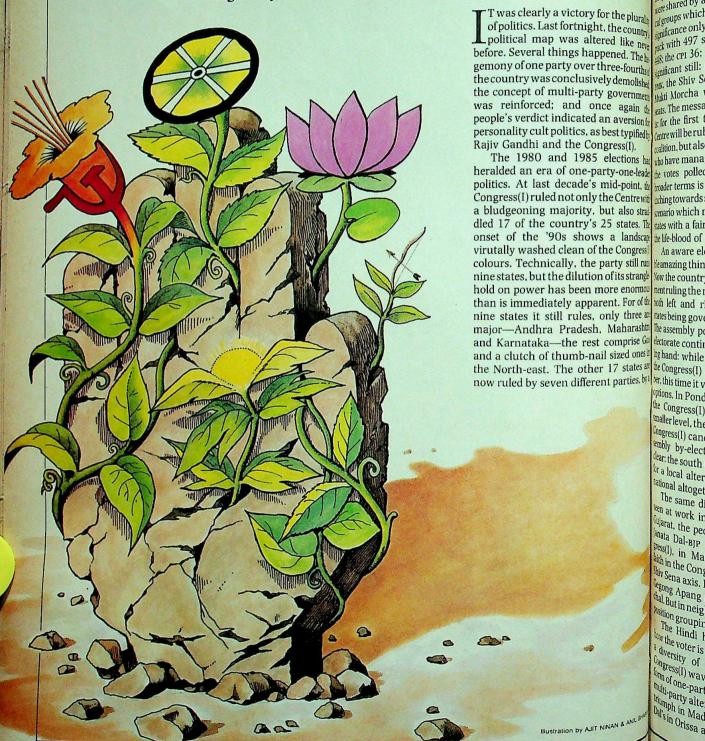
Ultimately should the BJP wish to rule the country, it has to prove that it is not the lesser evil but the better choice. The Congress(I) is entering a phase of innerparty struggle with Rajiv fast turning into the leader of just one faction. Within the Janata Dal—which is actually a loose combine of four different groups—factional loyalty is given more importance than allegiance to the party.

In comparison, the BJP is a disciplined party, rebellious postures like that of Kailash Joshi in Madhya Pradesh notwithstanding. But if it hopes to come to power at the Centre it has to be more inclusive than exclusive. Now that it has become clear that the BJP's success was not based on a Hindu revival but on an emphatic desire to replace the Congress(I), the party has to play the Hindu card less frequently, and, ironically, play the centrist card more often.

-BHASKAR ROY

A Plural Perspective

The electorate has decreed that no single party establish any sort of hegemony, and ride roughshod over the people



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hasm from saffron to red. The voter has quite obviously cast in Ineventualiti-party collective leaderbib both at the Centre and in the states. be lacts speak for themselves: of the Bellausembly seats up for grabs in the mult polls, the Congress(I) won only the lowest ever success rate of about Ber cent; the remaining 1,196 seats are shared by almost half a dozen politia groups which have assumed electoral spuncance only recently. The BJP led the set with 497 seats; the Janata Dal got ened. Theh the CPI 36; and the CPI(M) 12. More ree-fourthy miscant still: regional groups like the ydemolished par, the Shiv Sena, and the Jharkhand government until Morcha wrested more than 100 Rais. The message these statistic convey s for the first time, the states and the est typified, (catre will be ruled not only by a party or a malition, but also by a collection of groups elections has sho have managed to fetch a majority of he votes polled. What this means in mader terms is that the country may be ching towards some kind of federalism. A xmario which may see parties ruling the sales with a fair amount of autonomythe life-blood of any healthy democracy.

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An aware electorate has made possiarty still run hamazing things in the last few months. of its strangle Now the country has a minority governore enormos neutruling the nation with the support of ent. For of the whileft and right forces; and several nly three ar sates being governed by different parties. Maharasht he assembly polls have shown that the comprise Ga discorate continues to display a discernsized ones inghand: while the deep south voted for 17 states at the Congress(I) at the Centre in Novemt parties. billing time it voted for different political options. In Pondicherry, voters voted out he Congress(I)-led government. At a maller level, the Kerala voter rejected the Congress(I) candidate in the Haripad asby-election. The message was dear the south like the north was voting a local alternative and ignoring the tational altogether.

The same discerning hand could be at work in the west too. While in arat, the people gave the nod to the anata Dal-BJP combine over the Con-(state), in Maharashtra they reposed thin the Congress(I), rejecting the BJP-Sena axis. In the east, Congressman gong Apang gained favour in Aruna-But in neighbouring Manipur an op-The transparent out of the Congress(I). The Hindi heartland best displayed whe voter is now arrogating power to diversity of parties. Here the anti-Angress(I) wave was reflected not in the nof one-party rule all over, but in the hands, value all over, but in Bihar, the BJP's humph in Madhya Pradesh, the Janata bersin Orissa and that of the BJP-Janata

Dal combine in Rajasthan. For the first time political parties gained legislative representation commensurate with their voter support. Nor did the electorate show vagueness anywhere, except in Bihar.

The plurality extended down to the micro level. The best example was the Jharkhand Morcha in Bihar. It made impressive gains because of its local appeal, and trounced all the national parties in the tribal belt. Most of the local alternatives which have sprouted countrywide have done so at the cost of the Congress(I).

ONSEQUENT upon the rise to prominence of the local alternative has been the rebirth of the regional satrap, within not only the Congress(I) but also all other parties. This trend had first surfaced in 1983 when the Congress(I) lost both Haryana and Karnataka. However, with the advent of Rajiv Gandhi in 1985, it was effectively curbed. He ran the states like his personal fief-

> The complete Congress(I) sway of the '80s is a thing of the past. Now its writ runs over only three major states, while 17 are governed by an assortment of parties ranging from the extreme right to the extreme left.

doms, changing within a span of five years about 20 chief ministers.

What followed was inevitable. Local leadership eroded, with leaders becoming incapable of taking up cudgels on behalf of the local population. And in November last year, the party received a drubbing in northern India. For the first time in Congress(I) history, a prime minister could not secure a second consecutive term.

By the time Rajiv woke to his blunder, it was too late. Bringing back regional leaders like Jagannath Mishra and Madhavsinh Solanki failed because they were no longer viewed by the people as independent entities, but as mere appendages of an indifferent Centre. Moreover,

the rivals of these politicians had carved out distinct niches for themselves, palpably local and welcome to the voter. Similarly, in the south, where the Congress(I) was not in power, the voter cast for change and in favour of local leaders like Chenna Reddy and Virendra Patil.

Another notable feature of the elections appears to be the realignment of caste factors at the Centre and the states. From 1952 on, both the Centre and the state have been dominated by varying combinations of upper caste Brahmins, the urban rich, landed peasantry, and feudal elements including rich Harijans and other minorities. The 1990 verdict has, however, signalled the coming to power of intermediary castes and a post-1947 born leadership. For the first time two Yadav chief ministers rule almost one-fourth of the nation's population in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. While at the Centre, there are three ministers who belong to yet another intermediary caste-the Jats.

Perhaps the most important fall-out of this unique verdict is that the crumbs of power will have to be proportionately shared by the various parties. No longer will the Centre be able to run roughshod over either the states or even New Delhi's affairs. The National Front Government will have to take into account the views of both the BJP and the communists before making any policy announcement. And in cases like Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, the ruling front cannot afford to ignore the Congress(I)'s views.

At the state level, chief ministers like Biju Patnaik, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Chimanbhai Patel are giant leaders in their own right and neither V.P. Singh nor Devi Lal will be able to pull the strings from Delhi. In the case of the Congress(I) too. Rajiv's ability to run the states from 10. Janpath, has been considerably eroded. Chief ministers Sharad Pawar, Chenna Reddy and Virendra Patil have already displayed a modicum of freedom not visible while Rajiv was prime minister.

But the verdict also has its in-built dangers. The Congress(I) was an umbrella organisation led by a strong leader. Rajiv has lost his grip over the people but he retains it over the Congress(I), which will revolt only if V.P. Singh survives longer than what the Congress(I) has been made to believe. And herein lies the major challenge for V.P. Singh. He has been talking about collective leadership and a strong Centre with strong states. Whether V.P. Singh can manage to keep the various political forces together, without compromising his basic principles, is going to prove to be his litmus test.

-PRABHU CHAWLA

CONGRESS(I)

Storm in the Offing

Challenge to Rajiv's presidentship of party surfaces

T is like the lull before a storm. Two successive electoral routs may have numbed the Congress(I), rendering it incapable of reacting decisively. But there are clear indications that the party is about to enter a turbulent phase. The rumblings of dissent in the century-old monolith are already being heard.

Incredible though it may seem, a move has begun to replace Rajiv Gandhi as the Congress(I) president. Kamalapati Tripathi's call to partymen after the Lok Sabha poll to adhere to the one-man-onepost norm was the first salvo. The implication is crystal clear: Rajiv must give up the party presidentship as he has been elected leader of the Opposition in Parliament. Seven hundred copies of Tripathi's statement in both Hindi and English were sent to the party functionaries, legislators and the All India Congress(I) Committee (AICC-1) members in the states for their endorsement. The response, claim some partymen, has been "quite encouraging".

For the old guard, the moment to

reassert itself has arrived. So, men like Yashpal Kapoor, a close aide of Mrs Gandhi, have already contacted party leaders in different states to find a replacement for Rajiv. Says he: "We need a fulltime president without security problems who can freely tour the country and be approached by partymen.

As the Congress(I) today is mainly confined to the south, with just a few fast shrinking islands in the north, many believe the next president should be from the south. In view of the heavy representation of the south in the Congress(I) Parliamentary Party some stalwarts from the southern states are being urged to vie for the presidentship.

Meanwhile, still smarting under the impact of their humiliating defeats, former Congress(I) MPs, mainly from Uttar Pradesh, have set up a coordination committee to air their grievances. Last fort-

Rajiv and Tripathi at Congress(I) Working Committee meeting: widening rift

night, they met at the Delhi residence Jitendra Prasad, convenor of the comme tee, to analyse the reasons for the successive poll debacles.

One view prevailing in some circles that Rajiv may be persuaded to quit party presidentship without a director frontation. This approach was recently evidence when some party leaders to vinced Rajiv not to be part of a Congress delegation to President R. Venkataram to apprise him of the Punjab situation This, they argued, would be beneath! stature. Despite R.K. Dhawan's advice the contrary, Rajiv eventually agreed his party colleagues' proposal.

So deep is the despondency in the party ranks that it is not just the self-styl spokesmen but even many low-pro Congressmen who are today articulating their feelings about what went wrong This time round too, Vasant Sathedidn mince his words: "Though assemblyele tions were an extension of the Lok Salt polls, the overall picture shows a tot disillusionment with the Congressill Hari Krishna Shastri, a defeated form minister, went a step further: "The say rity phobia gripped the party and as result it got alienated from the people Grassroots party workers were not give proper recognition." Aslam Sher Kha former Indian hockey team captain a

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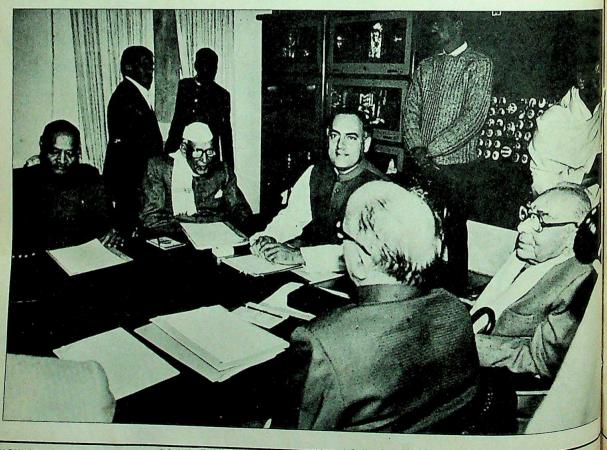
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This angry mood unbubtedly spells trouble an's advice irRajiv. Said a former MP ally agreed from Rajasthan: "If the osal. lot Sabha results were a idency in rerdict for change as we t the self-styl arebeing made to believe, ny low-prof reshould have swept the ay articulatin went wron assembly polls since we t Sathe didn had changed the chief miassemblyel nisters and PCC(1) chiefs in the Lok Sabi most of the states. Both the shows a tot outcomes were actually a Congress(I rendict against Rajiv.' efeated form er: "The sec

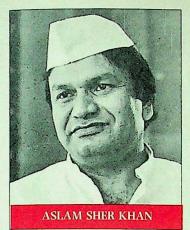
gow a Congress(I) MP

An unexpected boost wihe lobby demanding a new party president has ben Prime Minister V. P. Singh's resignation last brinight from the Janata Dal's presidentship. Altradymany Congressmen are asking: "If the Raja

can step down, why not Rajiv?"

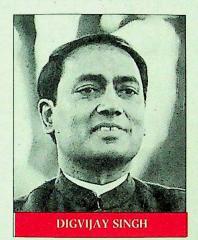
Aware of the brewing revolt, the Rajiv camphas resorted to diversionary tactics. At the meeting of the Congress(I) WorkingCommittee last fortnight, the proposal of holding organisational elections was revived once again. Rajiv, who partially named the Congress(I)'s organisational weakness for the poor electoral performance, stressed the need for inner party dections—postponed since 1972. The Rew plan is to ratify the amendments to the party constitution proposed by the mashankar Dikshit Committee at the RETAICC(I) session, tentatively scheduled hrMay. Following this will begin a threenonth-long membership drive. Towards beend of the year, the elusive party polls

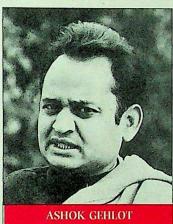
Cynics point out that each time the (ongress(l) leadership is seriously chal-Redit promises party elections. The first analy of any such exercise will be those odess leaders who lack a mass base but Well entrenched in the highest echelons the party. Understandably, a section of Eders With a strong popular base is keen seeing such elements out of the Con-Bess[], Says the AICC(I) official spokes-Man V.M. Gadgil; "The organisational Will trim and strengthen the party."





TARIO ANWAR





In a counter-move to the old guard's growing strength, the so-called Young Turks have now rallied around Rajiv Gandhi.

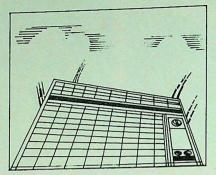
Even as the old guard is getting its act together, a group of younger leaders promoted by Rajiv during his prime ministership has launched a countermove to "liberate Rajiv Gandhi from the clutches of power-brokers". Aslam Sher Khan goes to the extent of identifying these "bosses in Delhi who have led Rajivji up the garden path". His list includes Arjun Singh, M.L. Fotedar, Bhajan Lal, R.K. Dhawan and Sitaram Kesari. Even the not-so-young Sathe supports this group and calls for "kicking out the deadwood, the soft optionwallas".

The so-called Young Turks have even decided to set up a forum to make their presence felt as the "seniors have let the party down". They are shortly calling a convention of former Youth Congress(I) leaders to consolidate their position. Apart from Khan, others involved in this move are: Tariq Anwar, Ashok Gehlot, Digvijay Singh and Dilip Singh Bhuria. Says Ghulam Nabi Azad, another staunch Rajiv lovalist: "For the Congress(I) workers across the country, Rajiv Gandhi is the only rallying point. His replacement as president will only lead to the disintegration of the Congress(I) as a political force.'

The current crisis in the Congress(I) cannot be fully understood till it is placed in a historical perspective. No two major centrist parties have ever co-existed in India. One has had to survive at the other's cost, since their constituency is more or

less the same. It can, therefore, be presumed that of the two centrist partiesthe Congress(I) and Janata Dal-one will eventually disintegrate. Being a 104year-old party, the Congress has a better chance of survival. V.P. Singh being aware of this is not interested in encouraging a split in the Congress(I). Instead, he wants to keep up the pressure on Rajiv. Singh is even reported to have told some dissident Congressmen not to leave the party now. By this argument, Rajiv is the only impediment to his way back home at a future date.

As Rajiv has failed to show the resilience his mother demonstrated during the 1977-79 period, such a possibility can by no means be ruled out. Instead of adapting to the altered political equations, he is merely shifting from one group of advisers to another, and desperately hoping for the National Front Government to commit some major blunder. Kashmir and Ram Janmabhoomi are the two issues on which, his strategists feel. Singh will stumble. As one negative vote has swept the Congress(I) out of power, another negative vote will pull the rug out from under the V.P. Singh Government, they tell Rajiv. Till then, along with Rajiv, they prefer to wait and watch. -BHASKAR ROY



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MAHARASHTRA

Stemming the Tide



Pawar holds BJP-Shiv Sena combine at bay

HARADPawar, Maharashtra'scircumspect chief minister, is normally not a favourite of political cartoonists. However, last fortnight, he was featured in cartoons appearing in virtually all major newspapers in the country. And every caricature hammered home exactly the same point that Pawar had finally broken free of the overweening influence of Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress(I) high command in New Delhi.

The liberation of Sharad Pawar could not have come about under more dramatic circumstances. While Congress(I) chief ministers in other states were swept aside by the Janata Dal and BJP. Pawar just about managed to stem the anti-Congress(I) tide that was sweeping through Maharashtra. His party won 141 of the 288 seats in the Vidhan Sabha, and managed to form the Government with the support of 10 rebel Congress(I) candidates.

For the Congress(I), even after the loss of more than 70 seats from the previous assembly, Pawar clearly

PRATIBHA 90-007

emerged as a saviour. The party citadel had been breached by the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance, but the saffron hordes had been beaten back. In the final tally, the Sena won 52 seats, the BJP 42, the Janata Dal 24, other parties 16, and independents 13. Even though no party had succeeded in getting a clear majority on its own, the Congress(I) was placed too far ahead of its nearest challenger, the BJP-Sena alliance, for Pawar to have any trouble in garnering the support of independents and returning to power.

The Congress(I) victory in Maharashtra has finally given Pawar the position that he has long aspired for but never quite achieved—a strong, influential state party boss who is not treated like a lowly subedar by the party high command.

The respect that Pawar now commands from the party bosses in New Delhi clearly reflects the fact that he alone takes the credit for stopping the

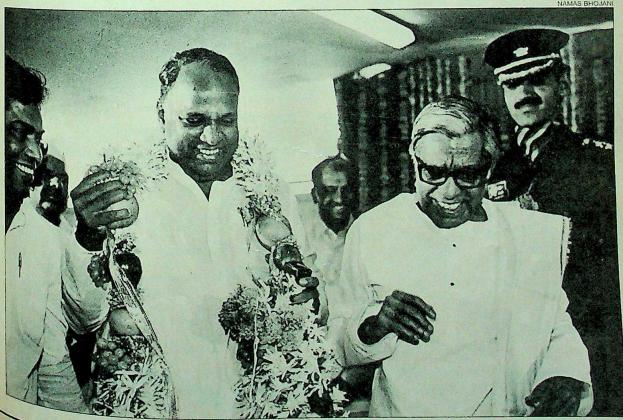
Pawar with Governor Subramaniam (right): standing tall

rightist Hindu juggernaut in its tracks. And as his former political ally. Shetkari Sangathan leader Sharad Joshi, appropriately observed: "Maharashtra is identified more with Sharad Pawar than with Rajiv Gandhi. And in that sense, it is Pawar's personal victory.'

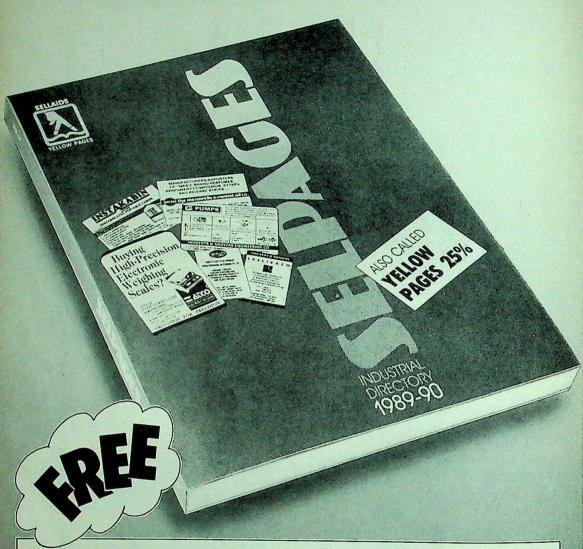
This became amply clear even before all the newly-elected Congress(I) MLAs could gather at the party's Vidhan Bhavan office in Bombay. This time, even the presence of party observers appeared a meaningless ritual, a relic from another age. There was no doubt about who was to become chief minister. And it was equally apparent that unlike in the past, Pawar was to select his own team of ministers.

The major surprise as he was swornin along with three other ministers at a tumultuous reception at Raj Bhavan was the inclusion of Dalit leader Ramdas Athawale of the Republican Party of India (RPI). The RPI had allied with the Congress(I) for the assembly poll. However, it had failed to win a single seat. Nevertheless, Pawar chose to honour a commitment made before the poll, while also looking ahead for consolidating Dalit support in the state for the Congress(I).

With his government enjoying just a six-seat majority, Pawar needed all his political skills to avert a sudden mishap. He joked that he was consulting friend



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Pramod Mahajan of the BJP (left) and Bal Thackeray

andpartyobserver K. Karunakaran who similarly ruled Kerala with a slender majority.

However, Pawar's savoir-faire failed toquell rumours that the BJP-Sena combine would engineer the defection of a major Congress(I) leader along with 40 legislators. Said Manohar Joshi, the first Sena MLA to become leader of the Opposition: "This is only a temporary government. Because of internal differences a good number of people will leave the Congress(I)."

Sena chief Bal Thackeray even predicted that Pawar will have to move to the opposition benches on the very first day of the new legislature. "It will be a planned miracle," he declared.

But most Congress(I) leaders poohpoohed Thackeray's forecast, pointing outthat only one rebel Congress(I) MLA, Raibhan Jadhav, was still talking of bringing down the Government. "Nothing of the sort will happen. Even at the time of giving tickets Pawar had accommodated all sections of the party. And he is doing the same now," maintained Bombay Pradesh Congress(I) Committee chief Murli Deora. And Pawar insisted that his government would be stable and would certainly last the full five-year term.

Pawar has promised panchayat and alla parishad elections before the monson. However in Bombay, elections to the Sena-controlled municipal corporation, whose term ends on March 31, will be held after the monsoon, on the plea that many people leave the city during burner vacations.

But the real reason seemed to lie elsewhere. The Congress(I) faces another disaster in the Bombay municipal Congress(I) managed to win only nine, while the Sena got 15 and the BJP nine.

And the Muslim League made a comeback after several years with one seat. Deora offered to take the responsibility for the poor showing and step down. And with the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee(I) chief N.M. Kamble already in the Cabinet, it seemed as though Pawar may finally get his own men into these two crucial party positions in the state.

For the Hindu alliance leaders, the failure to get

enough seats to make a serious bid for power in the state came as a major disappointment. Thackeray had spoken constantly before the poll about how the saffron flag would flutter from atop the Vidhan Bhavan. But in the alliance, it was his party which did much worse, achieving a success rate of a little over 28 per cent against the BJP's 40 per cent.

The Congress(I), of course, notched up the best figures, with more than 53 per cent of its candidates coming good. The Janata Dal, on the other hand, came a poor fourth with 15 per cent. Ultimately, a significant section of voters stayed away from the Sena, thanks no doubt to its militant Hindu political platform.

"Maharashtrians have shown that they will not support fundamentalist forces," said Pawar. This view received support even from the state Janata Dal President Mrinal Gore, who declared: "The people have elected a lesser evil." Though the Congress(I) had performed worse than in the recent Lok Sabha poll, when it led in 162 assembly segments, it had nevertheless managed to thwart a strong BJP-Sena challenge.

Now Pawar will need all his political acumen to not only retain his own position as a powerful Congress(I) chieftain, but also to regain lost ground for the party in Maharashtra.

-M. RAHMAN.

GUJARAT

Uneasy Equation



Chimanbhai takes charge with BJP support

AFTER a long wait of 16 years, the wheel turned full circle for Chimanbhai Patel last fortnight. Unceremoniously ousted from chief ministership in 1974—thanks to the Navnirman agitation—Chimanbhai had vowed to stage a comeback. To most people, however, the desire appeared to be a pipe-dream. A desperate Chimanbhai had even toyed with the idea of leaving the Janata Party and joining the Congress(I).

But suddenly the Congress(I) ship showed signs of sinking. The golden hour Chimanbhai had been waiting for had arrived. With the elections to the 182-member Assembly, the Janata Dal and the BJP dealt the worst-ever blow to the Congress(I) in the electoral history of Gujarat. Despite triangular contests in over 100 seats, the Congress(I) mustered

Chimanbhai Patel (left) and Keshubhai Patel: mutual distrust

GAUTAM TRIPATHI



just 33 seats to the Janata Dal's 70 and the BJP's 67. Independents-including former chief minister Babubhai Patel who contested on the invitation of the BJP-won 12 seats.

A triumphant Chimanbhai was sworn-in as the chief minister along with BJP leader Keshubhai Patel as the deputy chief minister. Expectedly, the transition of power was not a smooth one. Both parties fell much below the clear majority needed to form the Government-the Janata Dal by 22 seats and the BJP by 25 seats. With the Janata Dal gaining a slight edge of three seats,

Chimanbhai moved in swiftly for the kill.

Two obstacles, however, remained in Chimanbhai's path: the врр's firm stand against him-the party's senior leader Atal Behari Vajpayee described Chimanbhai as a Duryodhan in his poll speeches; and secondly its ally, Babubhai Patel, who had given a clean government to the state during the Emergency.

As soon as the party position became clear, a worried Chimanbhai despatched a letter to the вјр seeking its "cooperation" in forming a government. Babubhai, on the other hand, shot off a letter to the Janata Dal, the BJP and

the independent legislators, imploring them to form a front government of all anti-Congress(I) forces. The game-plan obviously, was to thwart Chimanbhai's bid for chief ministership. But the Janata Dal rejected the proposal outright, say. ing that since it was the largest groupin the House, it had the moral right to form the Government.

The mist began to clear after Chimanbhai's meeting with BJP leaders Shankarsing Vaghela and Keshubhai Patel. The BJP had, in principle, agreed to support Chimanbhai on the condition that Keshubhai would be sworn along

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Niche in the Hills



Apang leads Congress(I) back to power

THE setting: medieval. The occasion: the first assembly poll in the three-year-old north-eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh.

Chief Minister Gegong Apang invokes the blessings of the sun-moon god Donyipolo, sacrifices the sacred mithun (gaur) in hundreds, throws lavish bara khana (community dinners) to win the support of tribal chiefs, and treks through rugged hilly areas on an elephant.

Donyipolo did not fail Apang. While an anti-Congress(I) wave swept the rest of the country last fortnight, it got lost in the wilderness of Arunachal Pradesh. Tribals reciprocated his generous gifts with votes. And Apang created history by being elected leader of the Congress(I) Legislature Party to head the Government for a third successive term.

Said Apang: "This was not an



election, but a referendum on my tenyear tenure as head of the Congress(I) Government in the state." Retorted a peeved Janata Dal leader: "If that was the case, the Congress(I) would have not got just 37 out of 60 seats and secured a two-third majority only after five of the 11 independents came into its fold.'

Whatever the truth, the fact remains that the Opposition was practically non-existent and lacked the will to succeed. The Congress(I) sent truckloads of gifts-blankets, clothes and the local brew-to the interiors. where even opposition party manifestos, leaflets and posters could not reach on time.

In fact, barely a month before the elections, the Janata Dal was created by converting the lone regional group-the People's Party of Arunachal (PPA). The office-bearers had

> For Apang, the elections were a referendum on his 10-year tenure as head of the Government.

barely enough time to convince voters in far-flung areas about their new garb. At the same time, a section of the erstwhile PPA expressed their displeasure over the attempt to 'dilute' the regional appeal of the party. The result: the Janata Dal failed to attract enough candidates. Though it accepted five Congress(I) members in the party, it ran short of eight candidates for the 60 seats.

Worse, the Janata Dal Central leadership failed to provide either men or material to back up the election campaign. Only one Central leader-Railway Minister George Fernandes-showed up briefly. Compared to this, Apang not only had the resources at his disposal, but also star campaigners like former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, former Assam chief minister Hiteshwar Saikia and former Union minister Santosh Mohan Deb.

Apang claims the results were a foregone conclusion the day three of the party candidates were returned unopposed. Says he: "From the very beginning, we knew we are not going to sit on the opposition benches." But things are not all hunky-dory. Former chief minister and arch rival P.K. Thungon-who won the Arunachal (west) Lok Sabha seat despite strong opposition from the chief minister—is out for Apang's blood. On the eve of the elections, the Congress(I) high command received disturbing reports of Thungon's 'anti-party activities'.

Apang's supporters now fear that Thungon might destabilise the state Government with the support of the 11 Janata Dal MLAs, the remaining six independents and the lone Janata Party MLA. Despite Apang's apparent sanguineness, there definitely is a cloud looming large on his horizon.

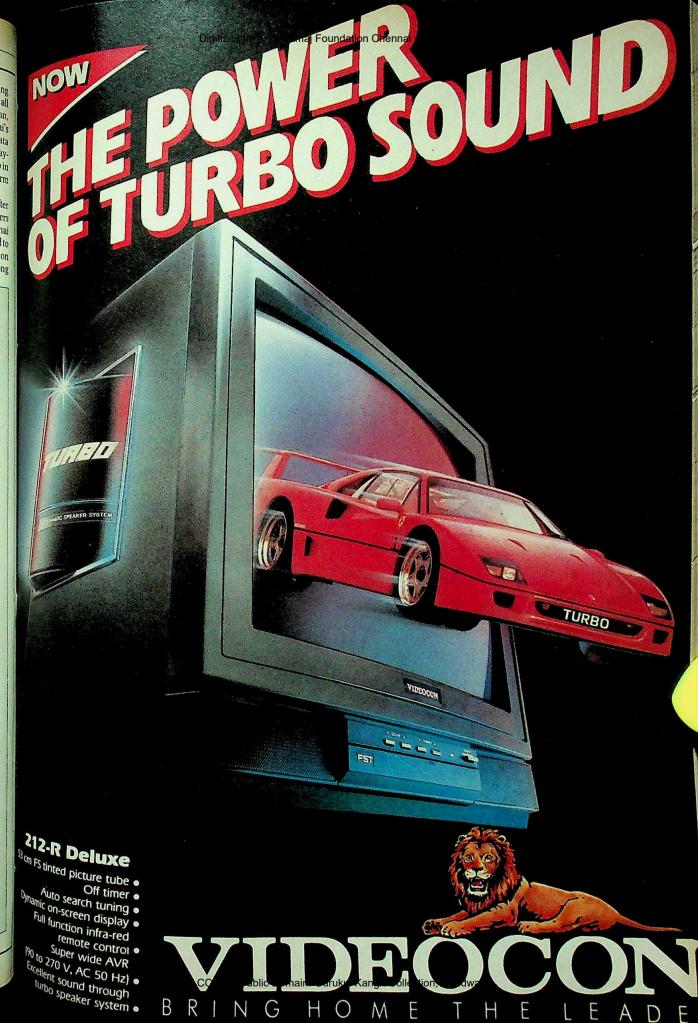
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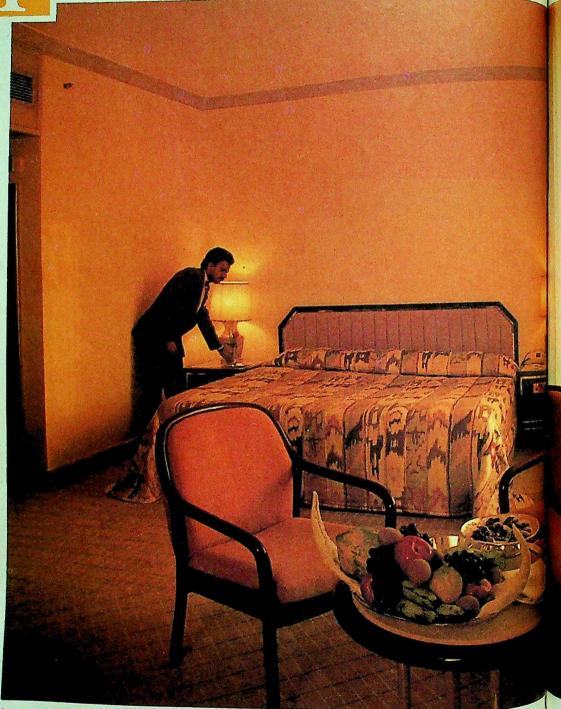
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with him. The purpose was to make thinanbhai realise that without the Children it was impossible for him to om the Government. Once satisfied hatithad achieved its aim, the BJP wrote o Chimanbhai expressing its willingness to join his government.

In terms of the state's caste-poll equations also, the wheel has turned full circle after 10 years. In 1980, Madhavsinh Solanki of the Congress(I) became the first member from a backward community to lead the state. Solanki and senior party leader hinabhai Darji then consolidated the

party's backward class base by propounding the кнам (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslim) theory and got rich dividends in the 1985 polls. Now an anti-Congress(I) wave has completely neutralised the KHAM theory.

But that could well turn out to be a temporary phase. For, apart from the risk of it being dubbed a government of (both Chimanbhai Keshubhai are Patels), the new dispensation also faces the danger of acquiring a distinct pro-Hindu image, thanks to the fact that there isn't a single Muslim MLA in either the Janata Dal or the BJP.

Despite the inherent contradictions in the coalition government—the BJP is led by the very man it campaigned against-Chimanbhai and Keshubhai have decided to chalk out a common minimum programme of action. "We have reposed complete faith in each other and will work in tandem to provide a stable and efficient government," they promised before newsmen.

However, if the mutual distrust and political undercutting evident during the poll campaign is any indication, it will be quite some time before all doubts are snuffed out. -UDAY MAHURKAR

T was the clearest mandate of the assembly elections. In Orissa, the Janata Dal-led combine won a five-sixths majority, cornering 129 of the 147 seats, with the Dal alone getting 123. Yet it

was not the party, but one man who got all the credit for the big win: Biju Patnaik, who stood taller than his 6 ft 4 inches by the time the results were declared.

In fact, so towering was Patnaik's personality, that in comparison, other leaders appeared political pygmies. Consequently, Orissa proved to be the rare state that did not witness a leadership tussle. On the contrary, partymen in the state bent over backwards to outdo each other in proving their unflinching loyalty to Patnaik.

And Patnaik lived up to his image by taking over the leadership of the state in right royal style. On March 5, his 75th

birthday, the Raj Bhavan gates were lung open to all and sundry and in the midst of a virtual stampede, Pat-Talk accepted the gift of the chief

Twenty-eight years ago he had held the same office. And the interim period had seen him evolve into one of the most effective and durable opposition leaders in the country. And as Patnaik moved ho a position of power last fortnight, he left in his path a badly crushed Congress(I) opposition.

Though forced to sit in the opposition benches, the Congress(I)'s pathetic tally of only 10 seats forced the party to face the humiliation of being denied the

Clean Sweep

Biju's charisma carries the day

status of the official opposition in the Assembly. Twenty-six Congress(I) ministers were trounced while PCC(1) chief Nandini Satpathy and former chief minister Hemananda Biswal just about



Biju Patnaik: no opposition

With all partymen loyal to Patnaik, Orissa proved the rare state where there was no tussle for the chief ministership.

scraped through with wafer-thin margins.

Ironically, it is this lack of challenge to Patnaik's leadership, both from within his party as well as from outside, that could ultimately prove

unhealthy. Given its numerical strength in the Assembly, the Janata Dal Government has no cause to worry about its survival. "But the point of concern is whether the Government would be a

responsive one," Banka Behari Das, a prominent Janata Dal member. Adds he: "In the absence of critics, Patnaik must engage in periodic soul searching and be his own safety-valve.'

The immediate task before Patnaik is far more down to earth. He has to form a ministry that keeps all sections within the Janata Dal happy. For partymen though all swear by Patnaik, they are divided into broad factions-the hardcore loyalists, the socialists and

members of the erstwhile Jan Morcha. Patnaik himself is said to have complained to close aides: "It's a very confusing majority.'

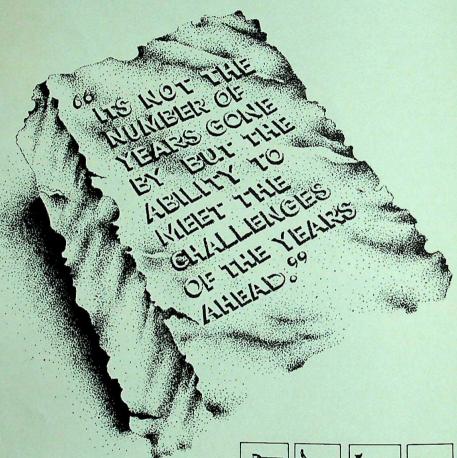
For some time, however, no partyman is likely to muster the courage to challenge the chief minister's authority. Particularly as most Janata Dal candidates, who did not have Patnaik's blessings, were trounced at the polls, notable among them being Trilochan Kanungo and Gulapi Behara. "The tragedy is that Patnaik has a lot of followers but he has no colleagues. The casualty, of course, would be collective leadership," notes Rabi Das, managing editor of the Oriya daily, Pragativadi. Surrounded by yes-



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EXPERIENCE



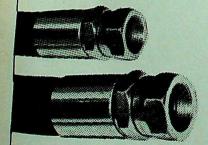








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ELECTION SPECIA Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennai and eGangotri

men, many fear that the authoritarian streak in Patnaik's character may come

on the positive side, Patnaik could always use his party's formidable strength to launch a frontal attack on the state's problems. Orissa's outstanding debts total a whopping Rs 3,366.9 croe; the per capita income has dipped from a high of Rs 529 to Rs 512; the per capita consumer expenditure is among the lowest in the country; growth rate in gross domestic produce has also

slumped to a low of 1.2 per cent. It is against this backdrop of economic decay that Patnaik has to fulfil his election promise of writing off rural loans of up to Rs 10.000 and bringing a second steel plant to Orissa.

For though personalities may have triumphed over issues in the din of the electoral battle, now that the dust has settled, the electorate will be looking for results. And it is up to Patnaik to seize the initiative right away, before stark problems begin to bog him down.

Says a Janata Dal legislator: "Bijubabu is the heart and soul of this government. The remaining could at best be termed ringside spectators." So should there be any lapse on the part of the Janata Dal Government in Orissa, Patnaik will find it hard to pass the buck. The buck in fact will stop with him.

For just as the credit for the Janata Dal's victory went to Patnaik, the onus for non-performance will also fall on him.

—RUBEN BANERJEE

MADHYA PRADESH

The Lotus Blooms



Joshi sulks as Patwa takes charge

RIGHT through the last decade, the BJP was the envy of every other political party. While other parties were racked by frequent defections, enervating splits and internecine factional wars, the BJP stood aloof in splendid isolation—the very embodiment of iron discipline.

Last fortnight, however, on the very eve of assuming power in Madhya Pradesh, the monolith of unanimity revealed a few cracks. Senior BJP leader Kalash Joshi, himself a contender for the thief ministership, refused to join the state Government, triggering off a crisis and delaying the formation of the ministry for two suspense-filled days.

For the Congress(I), the dissensions in what had hitherto been a solidly

disciplined party were cause for glee. Said a party leader: "It was like discovering that the virtuous lady next door was ready togo to bed with anyone."

Nevertheless, for the moment, the BJP has succeeded in papering over the cracks. Typically, in a style reminiscent of the Congress(I), it was Joshi himself who proposed party chief Sunderlal Patwa's name for the leadership of the legislature party, thereby paving the way for a unanimous election. And in a public show of going along with the party decision, Joshi Said: I am not joining the state Government because I want to run the Government from outside."

But it was clear that he was unhappy at the way the party had chosen Patwa as its leader. Indeed, Patwa's election at the meeting of the party legislature was only a formality. The BJP high command had approved Patwa's candidature at a press conference in New Delhi three days before the legislature party meeting. The 220 newly-elected MLAs were merely expected to ratify that decision.

It wasn't as if Patwa would not have won in the event of an election. As state party chief, he had had a major say in the distribution of tickets and is said to command the loyalty of two-thirds of the party's legislators. Joshi himself conceded: "I knew the outcome." And added: "My complaint is against the

process which was adopted."

In terms of ability too, Patwa has an edge over Joshi. A man of wide experience who was chief minister for a few days during the last legs of the Janata government in 1980, Patwa has been elected to the Assembly six times. And it was under his stewardship during the last five years that the BJP had built up a large organisational network and a mass base. Equally important, he had the backing of party Vice-President Vijayaraje Scindia and her political adviser Sardar Angre. The choice fell on him despite the fact that he is considered close to MPCC(1) chief Arjun Singhduring Singh's chief ministership. Patwa had even been called the "40th member of the Cabinet".

His rival, Joshi, is regarded as by far the most honest politician in Madhya Pradesh. What worked against him, however, is his record as chief minister of the state 14 years ago. Unable to bear the burden of high office, the simple Brahmin from Bagli village would go to sleep for long stretches, sometimes for as

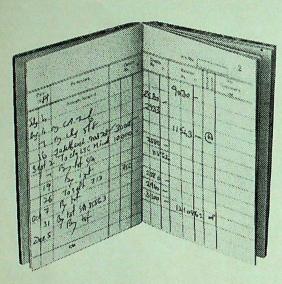
Piqued at the way Sunderlal Patwa was chosen as chief minister, senior BJP leader Kailash Joshi has rebelled.

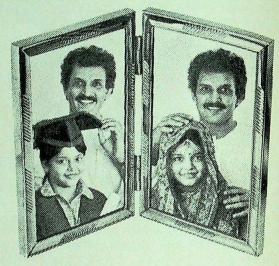
Kailash Joshi (left) and Sunderlal Patwa: widening rift



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Nevertheless, that experience does not seem to have deterred Joshi from staking his claim this time too. At the

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ion ned hour-long meeting of the legislature party, several party workers kept chanting slogans in his support. And even after the outcome was clear, Joshi remained miffed. Though he proposed Patwa's name for the leadership of the legislature party, he walked out of a press conference addressed by BJP President L.K. Advani and did not turn up for Patwa's swearing-in.

Later, despite requests, he refused to join the Government and the party had

to shelve its original plan of forming a ministry on March 5. As a result, the public swearing-in ceremony of the state's first BJP Government turned out to be a lame-duck affair—only Patwa could take the oath of office that day.

People have great expectations of the Government. And if Patwa cannot deliver on his election promises, he could find the popular mandate withdrawn with as much alacrity as it was given.

-N.K. SINGH

RAJASTHAN

Confident Position



Shekhawat skirts initial problems

BHAIRON Singh Shekhawat is a man brimming with confidence. Not even the rough weather caused by infighting within the Janata Dal, hisparty's coalition partner, can get the newly-elected Rajasthan chief minister down. And in his own BJP, he is making sure that no dissension clouds his leadership.

No one has any doubt that Shekhawat is in command. Soon after assuming charge as chief minister, his first step was to give his BJP rival Lalit Kishor Chaturvedi a safe fourth rank in the Cabinet, after his own man, Bhanwar Lal Sharma, and the Janata Dal's Naththi Singh. Later at his press confer-

ence, he ignored Union Food and Civil Supplies Minister Nathu Ram Mirdha's requests to announce new schemes and waiver of small loans for farmers. Shekhawat instead spoke on the BJP's Own manifesto promises. Said BJP parliamentarian from Jodhpur Jaswant Singh: "Shekhawat is an able man. He can provide a smooth sailing government in the state, despite a coalition."

If Shekhawat himself is beginning to display signs of over-confidence, it is not without good reason. Compared to the Janata Dal's performance in the assembly elections, the BJP has fared consider-

Shekhawat after being Sworn-in as chief minister ably well. The BJP's 85 seats in the state indicate that it lost only 11 segments since the Lok Sabha elections, while the Janata Dal lost 24 segments, mostly at the hands of the Congress(I).

In the poll for the 200 assembly seats, the Janata Dal and the BJP had an understanding on 160 seats, while triangular contests were held for 40. Of its allotted 80 seats, the BJP won 62. But the surprising factor lay in the 23 seats it wrested in the triangular contests. The Janata Dal, on the other hand, managed to win only 48 seats from its quota of 80, and only six seats from the remaining 40 where triangular contests were held. In fact, during the party MLAs' first meet-

ing, Janata Dal leader Kedar Sharma admitted that the party's performance had been alarmingly poor.

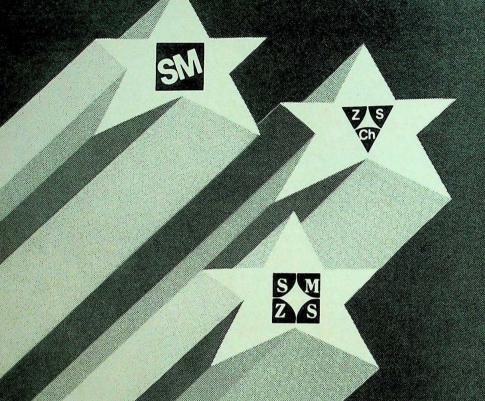
While Shekhawat appears to have skillfully skirted initial problems with the Janata Dal—by asking it to name its own men for the cabinet posts—the infighting within the Janata Dal may dog his government in the days to come. And the possibility of a direct conflict on the issue of giving priority to the agricultural sector cannot be ruled out.

The Congress(I), however, will continue to remain Shekhawat's major worry in the Assembly. Former chief minister Harideo Joshi has improved his hold on the state Congress(I) unit by diminishing the clout of the rival group led by Ashok Gehlot and his band of youngsters. In addition, the presence of Congress(I) heavyweights like Joshi, Shiv Charan Mathur, Heeralal Deopura and Jagannath Pahadia on the opposition benches will make Shekhawat's job doubly difficult. In the past too,



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elections had to be the Con 323 seatsshekhawat felt the pinch of lacking ariculatepartymentoleadthe attack on the Congress(I). And now with most enior BJP men in Parliament, he will be forced to fight his battles alone.

The challenges are plenty. For one, Shekhawat has announced action against those bureaucrats who advised be earlier government to announce pre-election sops of more than Rs 400 gore. He has also promised to rorganise the structure of the state's

watch-dog body, the Lok Ayukta, and bring the chief minister under its purview. On the economic front, the state's Rs 500-crore deficit shows no signs of receding, and it will need more than innovative steps to put the resourcescarce desert state's economy back on the rails. Nevertheless, Shekhawat is exultant: "We are going to provide such governance that the people will bid goodbye to the Congress(I) forever."

The BJP Central leadership, mean-

time, has given Shekhawat a free hand to manage the state effectively-ignoring murmurs of protest from other partymen. But it has also advised caution. In his characteristic poetic style, BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee told the state's MLAs: "Ab to kaam dikhaana hoga, varna ghar vapas jaana hoga" (Now you have to work well, else you may have to sit at home again). Shekhawat and his team would do well to remember this.

-PANKAJ PACHAURI in Jaipur

BIHAR

Consensus Crisis



A close shave for Laloo Yadav

NCERTAINTY acquired a human face in Patna last fortnight. Laloo Prasad Yadav may have won the race for the chief ministership that consumed the Janata Dal's state unit. But with large sections of the Dal opposed to him, Yadav's tenure is expected to be shaky-and, many believe, short-lived.

For though the results of the Bihar elections had clearly identified the loser to be the Congress (I)—with just 70 of the 323 seats—the winner remained elu-

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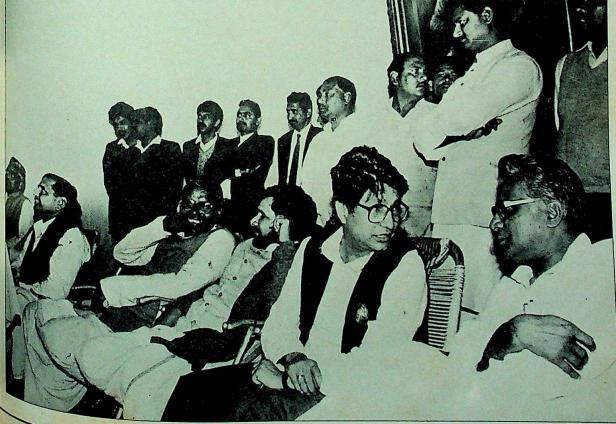
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sive. With 120 seats the Dal did emerge the single largest party, but it was far short of a simple majority on its own, leaving it leaning heavily on both the left parties (29 seats) and the BJP (37 seats).

As Yadav had an insufficient support base in a party whose position was insecure, he had to fight opposition to his becoming the chief minister from both within the Janata Dal and outside parties. To begin with there were three powerful contenders for the post: Yadav himself who had the backing of Central leaders like Sharad Yadav and Devi Lal; Raghunath Jha, supported by Chandra Shekhar; and Ram Sundar Das, backed by a powerful section of the party high command and most acceptable to the left parties and the Jharkand Mukti Morcha which won 19 seats.

Yadav eventually outmaneouvred the others because many of the victorious Dal legislators owed their nomination to him. He had, in fact, distributed the Janata Dal symbol to 106 candidates, of whom 68 won. Aware that Yadav would win if the issue was put to a vote. the Central team—comprising Railway Minister George Fernandes, Industry

Mulayam Singh Yadav, Sharad Yadav, Ajit Singh and Fernandes in Patna



PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

Minister Ajit Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadavhad at first tried to solve the leadership dispute through discussions. But when that failed, they had no choice but to put the issue to vote. Yadav expectedly defeated Das and Jha.

But aside from his coterie of supporters, few were happy with the result. Said a senior Janata Dal MLA: "Laloo himself cannot last for more than a few months at best." Another party MLA was harsher: "The state has been made the sacrificial lamb and the Janata Dal has anointed the butcher." Some partymen threatened a split, while a Raghunath Jha supporter warned: "Wait for a few days. Perhaps even the National Front Government at the Centre will fall.'

The Dal had only itself to blame for the mess in Bihar. For one, the selection of candidates had been arbitrary, with the result that criminal elements muscled their way into the Assembly courtesy the party. So bold have such elements become that at one point, Dhanbad don Suraj Deo Singh added a touch of absurdity to the proceedings by announcing that even he was in the race for the chief ministership. Later, he expectedly withdrew.

But while criminals have long been a part of Bihar politics, where the Janata Dal went all wrong was in its caste calculations. A disproportionate number of Yadavs were nominated, with the result that 33 of the new Dal MLAs belong to the caste. And it is the upper castes who most bitterly oppose a backward caste chief minister like Laloo Prasad (the second Yadav chief minister in Bihar's history).

As few consider Yadav capable of running the state, he is bound to receive flak from all directions. And though he is known for giving it back as hard as he gets it, Yadav's brand of strong-arm politics is clearly more palatable and effective in the Opposition than in the -UTTAM SENGUPTA Government.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Sweeps to Power



BIP wipes out Congress(I)

Y administering the oath of officein Sanskrit, promising to develop Himachal Pradesh as a centre of 'religious tourism' and not giving any representation to upper Himachal in his cabinet, the new BJP Chief Minister Shanta Kumar has made it clear that his party intends to dig its feet deep into the state. With an overwhelming majority of 44 in the 68-member House the BIP is in a position to achieve this goal.

Shanta Kumar, a former teacher and RSS pracharak (activist), knows that by

LALOO PRASAD YADAV

"No one dare topple me"

KNOWN more for his lung power and colourful vocabulary, Laloo Prasad Yadav, 42, stole the limelight last fortnight when he became chief minister of Bihar. Still residing in the peons' quarters adjacent to the Patna Veterinary Col-

lege-where two of his brothers work as peons-Yadav exuded confidence when he spoke to Senior Correspondent UTTAM SEN GUPTA. Excerpts:

On his election triggering off a revolt in the party:

The party has been strengthened by this democratic exercise. The Congress(I) culture of imposing a leader wouldn't have worked. Why hide from a secret ballot? I expect no trouble.

On his public image:

I am frank and outspoken. Some people get annoyed. When they see I am a straight person they get round.

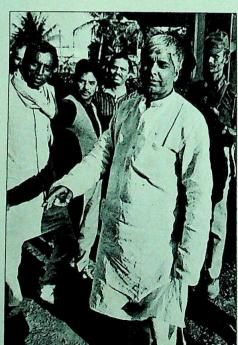
On the prospects of his government:

This is the Janata Dal. If you think the Congress(I) wheelingdealing will have any impact on us, you are mistaken. This government will be stable.

On the difference between

his government and previous governments:

We will touch a sympathetic chord in the people. Jagannath Mishra ki sarkar ko to bus swarg me seedhi lagana baaki tha (The only thing left out by the



Jagannath Mishra Government was to place a ladder to heaven). He promised everything, but did nothing.

On the possibility of the Government being toppled:

The Congress(I) is not going to return. Mishra knew the writing on the wall. Hence his last act as chief minister was to authorise the leader of the Opposition to use government planes. Nobody dare topple this gov-

ernment. Those who do, will be toppled by the people.

On why the Janata Dal did not get a majority:

The BJP chose to field candidates against us. Even the Congress(I) financed many independents to divide opposition votes.

On his nominating criminals:

They have been cleared in the people's court.

On his lacking experience: Time will tell. The Assam chief minsiter is junior to me. When I was jailed during the Emergency, Rajiv was nowhere. But later old Congressmen touched his feet. I was an MP in 1977, an MLA subsequently. Where is the question of lacking experience?

On the criticism levelled at him by Janata Dal legislators:

Let them be Chanakyas, but in Pataliputra let me be Chandragupta.

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BJP

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Introducing TouchWood Polyurethane Clear Wood Finish. It forms a tough layer over wooden furniture — a layer that resists scratches and stains many times better than polish.

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That's because polish can only form a weak and thin coat: a coat that just can't stand up to spills and scratches.

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Like paint, TouchWood can be brushed on; a job any painter can do. So the next time, instead of getting your furniture polished, try TouchWood.

And because it forms a tough, thick, protective layer, unlike polish, it takes longer to dry. But no longer than the paint on doors and windows.

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And though TouchWood costs a little more than polish, it more than pays its way by the protection it gives your beautiful wooden furniture: many times longer than polish.

Glossy or matt finish

TouchWood is available in two finishes glossy and matt — unlike polish And unique TouchWood stainer can make even ordinary wood look special.

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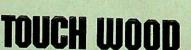
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TouchWood. You need to try it just once and you'll see how well it preserves your furniture's beauty.





Brush on. And keep wood looking new.



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GCEL presents PBTs with a unique electronic combination STD lock facility.

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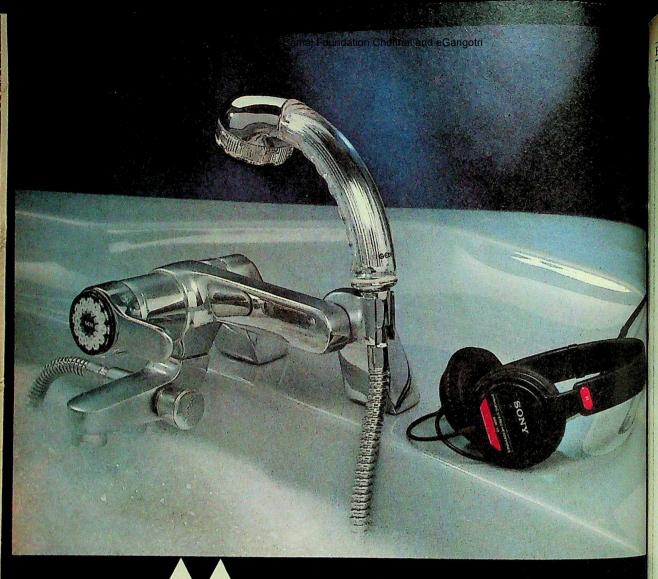


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of the p governm undermining the imporpance of upper Himachal which threw up all major Congress(I) leaders—he can give an effective body blow to the party's prospects in the state.

But ignoring this rich and influential region is not the only departure from tradition by the new Government. After the victory, it held its first public meeting at the Ridge at Shimla which till now was available only for meetings of prime ministers. The

runcated Congress(I) boycotted the swearing-in ceremony in protest against the use of the Ridge.

Going by the Congress(I)'s low morale and its strength in the Assembly, that's all it can do at present. Its lead in 20 assembly segments in the Lok Sabha poll has been reduced to eight now. But the severest blow it received has been at



the hands of Janata Dal's Ram Lal who defeated chief minister Virbhadra Singh at Jubbal Kotkhai. Singh, however, managed to win the Rohru seat.

On the political front, the Janata Dal with its 11 members in the House does not pose a challenge to Shanta Kumar though its vocal state President Vijay Singh Mankotia might try to embarrass

Shanta Kumar being sworn in as chief minister

the chief minister with his rhetoric. And in the absence of a strong opposition, it's the men from Shanta Kumar's own party who can make the going tough for him. As an act of appeasement, he has given the number two position of the state to his arch-rival Jagdev Chand. But state party General Secretary Radha Raman Shastri hasn't been simi-

larly placated. As he hasn't been given a berth in the Cabinet, he stayed away from the swearing-in ceremony.

However, Shanta Kumar's biggest challenge, which will determine his longevity at the helm of power, come from the problems of backwardness and neglect that have continued to dog this hill state over the years.—PANKAJ PACHAURI

7 HEN the DMKcoalition snatched power away from the Congress(1)-AIADMK combine on the strength of one seat-and formed the Government in Pondicherry after having sat in opposition benches for a decade—it was reasserting its strength after suffering a debacle in Tamil Nadu in the Lok Sabha polls.

But the battle for Pondicherry proved a close fight. The DMK and its allies, the Janata Dal and the communist parties, notched up 14 seats, with the DMK alone getting a tally of nine. The Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance

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also won 14 seats in a House of 30. Just when a stalemate seemed imminent, a rebel DMK victor, Kamalakannan, threw in his lot with the DMK-led

Says former Congress(I) chief minister M.O.H. Farookh: "We are the Single largest party with 11 seats. Combine this with the AIADMK's three seats and we are a strong opposition. It means we have not lost the confidence of the people. They have formed a government under the protection of a



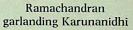
PONDICHERRY

Slender Lead

DMK stuns Congress-AIADMK

rebel candidate for a technical majority. They are standing on flimsy grounds. Let us wait and see what happens later.'

The defeat of the Congress(I)-AIADMK alliance was a shock for even the most pessimistic observers from those parties. What possibly upset their calculations was the strenuous election campaign of the DMK, whose partymen covered each assembly segment. On the other hand, the AIADMK campaign, particularly Jayalalitha's,



was lack-lustre. At first the lady refused to travel to Pondicherry, and when she finally did cave in to demands of the Congress(I) and the AIADMK, she came up with an indifferent campaign. The upshot: the AIADMK let down its electoral partner by winning only three of the 13 seats it contested, while the Congress(I) won 11 out of 17.

The Congress(I) can draw comfort from the fact that winning on the strength of one seat places the DMK-led coalition on shaky ground. One look at the new six-member min-

istry headed by Chief Minister D. Ramachandran reveals the DMK's insecurity. Besides Ramachandran, the ministry includes two DMK men, two from Janata Dal (though the party won just four seats), and the DMK rebel whose support proved so crucial.

It is a ministry whose prime purpose seems to be to ward off defections-which the Congress(I)-AIADMK combine will undoubtedly be busy trying to engineer.

-KAVITHA SHETTY

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DULHASTI HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECT

The French Connection

Undue favours shown to French consortium

IT is one of the 15 major deals signed by the previous government which the National Front Government is probing. And if initial scrutiny done by the Prime Minister's Office, senior officials of the Energy Ministry and the CBI is any indication, the Rs 1,100 crore Dulhasti hydro-electric project on river Chenab in Jammu & Kashmir is going to be yet another albatross around Rajiv Gandhi's neck. Senior Editor PRABHU CHAWLA pieces together many questionable details of the contract signed between the CGEE-Alsthomled French consortium and the National Hydro-electric Power Corporation (NHPC) showing that the deal was not above board.

THE negotiations were mind-boggling and continued over seven years. On one side of the table were the two contenders for the much-coveted Dulhasti project, the French consortium led by CGEE-Alsthom and the Indo-Austro-German (IAG) consortium. On the other, the representatives of the NHPC and the various government committees.

Apart from the fact that not all normal procedures were observed during the negotiations, the French contractors were chosen ignoring all the recommendations of the negotiating committee and other experts of the energy department. There were major flaws at various stages:

▶ The French Consortium was allotted the letter of intent without even finalising the terms and conditions.

▶ The Government buckled under pressure from the French in accepting unreasonable demands regarding the relaxation of income tax and customs laws.

▶ It allowed the massive upward revision of the contract value without any justification.

▶ It ignored the relatively cheaper and favourable terms offered by the Germanled consortium.



INDIGENOUS

The Dulhasti Project (three units of 130 mw each) was originally approved by the Union Government as early as December 1980 at an estimated cost of Rs 183.5 crore. The project was to be executed indigenously by the NHPC.

The project when completed was to generate over 1,900 million units of elec-

Nothing happened to the project till August 1983 when it was discovered by the Finance Ministry that it was short of funds. What is more surprising is the fact that foreign offers from the Germans and the French for execution of the Dulhasti project had already been received by the Government.

In a meeting presided over by the former finance minister Pranab Mukherjee on August 23, 1983, it was agreed that the "Dulhasti project should be taken up for examination in the context of offers received for its implementation with foreign assistance".



1983-86

Accordingly offers from a French consortium led by CGEE-Alsthom and an Indo-Austro-German (IAG), consortium led by Universale Bau for executing the project on a turnkey basis were taken up for evaluation by the Government. A steering and negotiating committee headed by the chairman of the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) considered the financial package of the foreign contenders.

The committe took its own time, perhaps considering the various complex technological problems involved in the project, and submitted the report only in May 1986. The committee found that the French net evaluated offer of Rs 444.60 crore after deducting the grant inbuilt in the quotation, was cheaper than the Rs 450.57 crore offer by IAG.

On November 5, 1986, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)





headed by Rajiv Gandhi approved the proposal at a cost of Rs 496 crore. Two weeks later, on November 24, the cou approval was conveyed to the NHPC. On December 2, a letter of intent was sent to the French consortium without listing any specific conditions nor setting any deadline for signing the contract.



The letter of intent was, however, subject to the satisfactory conclusions of the discussions including settlement of 'essential and incidental" terms and conditions in the contract. To sort these out the NHPC constituted a working level committee in December 1986 to finalise the contract. Suddenly, on December 29 the Department of Power authorised the NHPC to appoint yet another steering and negotiating committee under the CEA chairman with representatives from the ministries of power, finance, NHPC, CL and Water Commission for holding pro contract negotiations.

Both the committees held over adore rounds of discussion with the French representatives but no agreement colling be reached on important conditions those relating to unpredictable and ad verse geological turmoils.

With the letter of intent in its pockel the French consortium, started putting forward tough conditions in the dorn rounds of negotiations it held with the mi committees:

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(Left) The Dulhasti project site; and (above) the contract being signed

consortium. "It has been in-

dicated by the committee in its report that, in spite of several rounds of discussions for finalisation of the terms and conditions of the contract, it was not possible to reach an agreement with the French consortium. During negotiations, the consortium had reopened several settled issues and raised some fresh issues. While after protracted discussions, agreement could

be reached over a number of points, differences continued to persist on some of the major issues," Sathe's letter said.

the project was delayed due to unpredictable adverse geological conditions.

- That the place of arbitration should be France and not India.
- They wanted the option of delaying beproject and even claim renegotiation if was delayed beyond six months due to latural reasons.
- And that the payments made to it should be exempted from income tax and outsoms duty.

These conditions obviously were not to easy to concede. In June 1988, the matterwasfinally sent to the committee of scretaries by the power department sector, recommending cancellation. Instead, the committee decided to give three more months to the French so that some of the knots could be untangled.

With the French gaining the upper bandshrough tough talk there was bound be some sort of objection. It came from the some sort of objection. It came from sort of objection is the some sort of objection. It came from the sort of objection is the sort of objection. It came from the sort of objection is the sort of objection of objection in the sort of objection objection of objection of objection of objection objection of objection of objection objection of objection obj

1988 FRESH OFFERS

In August 1988, the Government was faced with yet another impasse as even the French Government did not help finalise matters. The NHPC, perhaps concerned at the rigmarole they had got into, approached the Indian embassy to "use its good offices with the French Government



to persuade the consortium to finalise the contract". But there was no positive response either from the French Government or the consortium. The French had obviously pushed the Indian negotiators into a corner.

Finally, on August 12, the Government was forced to reopen the entire project contract. NHPC was authorised to reopen the negotiations with the IAG as well. Now the French began to loosen their grip and came to the table. Both the French and

IAG tendered fresh offers which were opened on October 24, 1988. The IAG offer of Rs 930.35 crore was still cheaper than the French quotation of Rs 1,130.43 crore.



1988 AUSTRO-GERMAN CONSORTIUM RECOMMENDED

The Government chose to begin negotiations with both for a further reduction in costs. Even after prolonged discussion the revised offer of Rs 838.99 crore by IAG submitted on November 12 was cheaper than the revised French offer of Rs 932 crore.

On November 21, the NHPC's negotiating committee recommended in a report for the second time the cancellation of the French letter of intent issued in 1986 and allotment of the contract to the IAG. "It appeared to the committee that they (French) were bent upon getting such terms and conditions incorporated in the contract which would enable them to make substantial extra claims during the execution of the project... Increasing the price at this stage is a most unethical act on their part," the scathing report said. The committee suggested that the letter of intent issued to the French be cancelled.

According to the committee the IAG offer was cheaper; they had accepted all NHPC conditions; they were also technologically superior to the French and so should be awarded the contract. Even Sathe felt that the IAG offer was cheaper. "After holding intensive negotiations with both the parties, and obtaining revised offers from them, the committee has concluded that the contract should be placed with Indo-Austro-German Consortium, based on the lower price quoted by them," his confidential note said.

But the French consortium had other

aces up its sleeve. On November 21 itself, the day the committee recommended cancellation of the letter of intent, the French embassy forwarded another offer-this time in Japanese ven. This offer, calculated in yen, was lower than their previous offer by Rs 49.80 crore.

Even Sathe concurred with the conclusion of the committee regarding the cost of the project. Wrote Sathe: "It is indicated by the committee in their report that the French consortium had first increased their prices in their offer dated 24.10.88 by about Rs 440.76 crore over the price of Rs 737.85 crore with respect to their offer of April, 1986. Then on 7th November '88, they reduced their price to Rs 968.96 crore, thereby giving a reduction of about Rs 209.64 crore. However, even then, they were higher by Rs 231.11 crore with respect to their offer of April, 1986 (at October '88 exchange rates). Such heavy fluctuations in price, the committee feels, reflect the most casual attitude of the French consortium towards the entire matter of price quoted by them.'



OCT 1988 THE FRENCH BACK

Once the Government began serious negotiations with IAG, the French realised that they meant business and suddenly shifted from their rigid stand. On October 17, they informed the Government that they had found a new civil contractor who would be willing to take up the job. One of the reasons for the failure of negotiations and the calling of the second tender was the fact that the first civil contractor of the French placed stiff conditions.

The Government, however, as was evident at this stage, had given a long leash to the French and there were all indications that CGEE-Alsthom would bag the contract come what may. And so, against the specific recommendation of the committee, negotiations with the French consortium were reopened. The then finance secretary S. Venkitaramanan intervened on behalf of the Government and got the French offer "substantially improved on December 5, 1988". And whatever hopes the IAG had of clinching the contract might have vanished after this firm nudge the French were given. The arduous process started all over again as the negotiating committee was asked to evaluate the fresh offers on the basis of future fluctuations and customs duties. The committee came to the conclusion that the project would eventually cost Rs 1,158 crore in case of



the French and Rs 1,051 in the case of IAG—a major increase on the initial estimate for the project cleared by the CCEA at Rs 367.5 crore.

And any way, according to estimates, the generation cost would only have been Rs 50.53 per unit if indigenous technology was used, much less than the Rs 54.67 in case of the French.

There were more than enough reasons for the French firm to be disqualified from the race. But the French connection obviously ran deep. It was ironically not the Power Department which was keen on them. The Finance Ministry and that too its secretary Venkitaramanan was the invisible hand push-

he Energy Ministry

was sidelined and the

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Venkitaramanan

backed the French.

ing the French project.

The Finance Ministry even intra duced a new angle which had not be there earlier: the availability of the loan and grant. The Finance Ministr conclusion: the French offer was in a cheaper if assessed on the basis of R currency loan and the total availability funds from the French consortium Though, the Finance Ministry admin that the French offer was expensive maintained that if the grant element taken into account it was cheaper. example the IAG offer had a Rs 2568 crore grant built into it as against Rs 429.80 crore of the French. In addition the Finance Ministry also concluded the the German soft grant was not available separately for the project.

On December 23, Venkitaramana informed the Energy Ministry that the French offer should be accepted. Thenew found logic: the German Government mixed credit financing would not be avail able. The proof cited: a letter from t German ambassador dated December 18 1988.

PRAMOD PUSHKARNA



French support in multilateral fora, such as, World Bank and IMF is extremely important. A Telex Letter of Intent has already been placed on the French consortium. Withdrawal of this is likely to vitiate our friendly relations. We would support the views of Ministry_of External Affairs on this.



Linergy Ministry officials led by secretary Rajagopal were against the project being given to the French.

Venkitaram sterpreted the way he wante Sathe is any ind Venkitaramana as intended. stated: "My go pared to partici run of the riv under the cond ble within the German econor Venkitaram new of the indi

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n view of the recalcitrant attitude shown by the French consortium there is every possibility of the project getting delayed."

VASANT SATHE Former Minister for Energy



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JAN 1989 SATHE FINDS HOLES IN FRENCH OFFER

Venkitaramanan, it is now known, interpreted the ambassador's letter the hav he wanted. If the secret letter by Subeis any indication, the meaning that lakitaramanan inferred was not what intended. The ambassador's letter sated: "My government would be prepred to participate in the financing of a m of the river hydro-power station under the condition that funds are availble within the annual quota of Indo-German economic cooperation."

Venkitaramanan's conclusion: "In new of the indications received from the Gaman side from time to time and the recent letter dated December 13, 1988, tom the German ambassador addressed the minister for Energy, it has been decided that the German government's miced credit financing would not be availble for the project.'

But Sathe who meticulously studied aspects of the project, effortlessly shot Venkitaramanan's interpretation. The ambassador of FRG has, however, Parately informed that his government hand be prepared to participate in the ancing of a run-of-the-River Hydro Battic Power Station under the condion that funds are available within the Annal Indo-German Economic Cooper-

ton Programme and that the appraisal the project has a positive outcome. In the American a positive outcomes a positive outcomes and the state of The Austro-German Consortium, that Case of a shortfall in the FRG portion of Pancing in 1988-89 and 1989-90, they kidd be prepared to meet the shortfall Aphiliany extra cost to the Government all case the grant element in the financing package offered by the IAG Consortium is evaluated on the basis that the mixed-credit financing would be available from FRG, their evaluated price would continue to be lower than that of the French Consortium." Sathe concluded: "The apprehension of the Ministry of Finance (about the German grant) is not considered valid.'



SEP 1989 FRENCH CONTRACT

Despite serious technical and financial objections from the Department of Energy it was the finance secretary's view which prevailed. Venkitaramanan even went to the extend of replying to this: "Withdrawal of this (contract) is likely to vitiate our friendly relations," he said in a secret letter dated January 29, 1989-in reply to Sathe's note-addressed to the cabinet secretary.

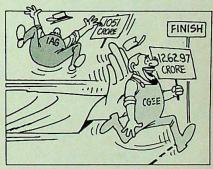
The race to conquer Dulhasti was not yet over. There were, in a way, miles to go. Armed with specific orders from the Finance Ministry, the Energy Ministry decided to constitute yet another committee to evaluate this offer.

The top men of the French team had even set up camp in Delhi. The French commerce minister who visited Delhi on January 31, 1989, wrote a letter to Sathe pleading the French case.

Finally all objections and doubts were brushed aside and the deal was sealed. The contract between the NHPC and the five-member French consortium led by CGEE-Alsthom was signed on September 9, 1989, barely three weeks before the last Lok Sabha elections. The project, which had originally been conceived in 1981 at a cost of Rs 183 crore, was finally allotted to the French consortium at an estimated cost of Rs 1,150 crore.

The Dulhasti project is one of the few deals in which top-level involvement of the two governments was obvious. At the last stages the French President was also brought into the picture. "The view of the Ministry of External Affairs is that PM might like to bring to the notice of the French President the feeling of the government of India....It is necessary for us to tell the French President that in so far as the particular project is concerned we have lost a lot of time which has resulted in escalations of the cost to the extent of more than Rs 200 crore," Sathe's letter said.

With such high stakes and high-level deliberations it is no wonder that norms were not strictly observed from the very beginning of the tortuous marathon, including the telex of intent in 1986 which was sent without any of the major details being finalised. Worse, the Energy Ministry was sidelined while the Finance Ministry beginning with Pranab Mukherjee and later on Finance Secretary Venkitaramanan guided the ceee-Alsthom-led



French consortium to the finish.

The meandering saga of the "entire process of negotiations with the French consortium was an arduous one" according to the committee. And the outcome of all that does not give the impression that it was all fair play. The way the project was opened to foreign bidding, the haste with which the first telex of intent was sent, the tactics adopted to pull back the French and push out the Austro-German firm from the race for Dulhasti, the abnormal interest shown by the finance secretary in the crucial stages and above all the fact that the energy minister and veteran administrator Vasant Sathe had shot down the Finance Ministry's reasonings-all of which were ignored-raises many questions and suspicions of kickbacks having been paid.

And even as the French are boring tunnels under the distant banks of the beautiful river Chenab, the Government is digging out murky details of this controversial deal from the corridors of power in New Delhi.

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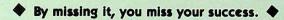
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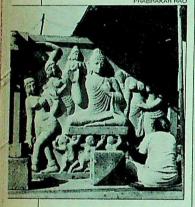
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NOT A MERE CHOICE BUT A GUARANTEE

ANDHRA PRADESH Sinking Buddha

• IT was a tragic end to an ambitious scheme. As the barge carrying the 15.17-metre-tall, 300-tonne Buddha statue capsized in Hyderabad's Hussainsagar lake last fortnight, killing eight persons, the extravagant Rs 5.7crore project literally sank.

The statue had barely begun its final journey-on a specially designed pontoonfrom the shores for installation on the Rock of Gibraltar in the lake, when the barge



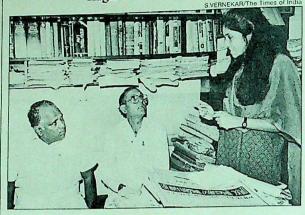
The base of the statue

overturned.

The white granite monolith, considered to be the tallest in the world, was made at a quarry near Raigir, about 50 km from the city, by 150 skilled sculptors of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. While the statue cost Rs 60 lakh, the platform and pedestal in the water cost Rs 2.32 crore. The transportation and installation work given to Assam Bengal Carriers cost another Rs 1.71 crore. To bring the statue to the city from Raigir, the Government spent Rs 37 lakh on improving bridges and roads.

The expenditure on the gigantic exercise—a brainchild of former chief minister N.T. Rama Rao-had invited flak from the present Government. Now with experts doubting the possibility of salvaging the statue, the project seems consigned to a watery grave.

MAHARASHTRA **High-Handed Tactics**



Pawar, Vashi and Parul: joint action

• THE incident was the latest example of the Shiv Sena's bullying tactics. Last fortnight, Bombay lawyer and Janata Dal leader M.P. Vashi was besieged in his flat at night by hundreds of screaming Sena members. His daughter, Parul, an advocate, was manhandled.

Desperate calls to the police station next door, however, brought no response. Vashi then telephoned Advocate-General Arvind Bobde, who got a top police official to order the local inspector to go to Vashi's aid.

The Sena members were obviously provoked by the fact that Vashi planned to file nine election petitions against the Sena. Vashi had earlier successfully got the Bombay High Court to set aside former Shiv Sena mayor Ramesh Prabhoo's election to the Assembly in 1987 on the ground that the campaign was communal.

The Sena frenzy and police inaction created a furore. It also led to an unusual visit by Congress(I) Chief Minister Sharad Pawar to Vashi's residence to reassure him that he was willing to cross party lines to check Sena high-handedness and police partisanship.

Said Janata Dal city Secretary Pradyumna Badheka: "If the police function on the basis of who is for Hindutva and who is against, there will be total chaos."

TAMIL NADU **Unaccommodating Stand**

• THE refugee problem in Tamil Nadu took an unusual turn when a ship, Harsh Vardhana—carrying Tamils fleeing from Trincomalee-was not allowed to disembark at the Madras harbour last fortnight.

The refugees were reportedly supporters of non-LTTE groups fleeing from the LTTEwho have earlier been generously accommodated by the state Government at the Mandapam and Kottapattu

Harbour officials, however, refused to comment on

the matter, except to say that none of the refugees had papers. The ship, meanwhile, was diverted to Orissa where the refugees are to be settled temporarily.

Supporters of non-litte particularly groups, EPRLF, say the Tamil Nadu Government and the Indian Government have turned their back on all Tamils except those belonging to the LTTE. The apathy towards these refugees is seen as only a further indication of Chief Minister Karunanidhi's benevolence towards the LTTE.

NEW DELHI **Hustled Out**

 IT is common knowledge that Madhya Pradesh Janata Dal leader V.C. Shukla is a fay. ourite target for potshots by former socialists in his party. However, no one had thought the MP from Mahasamund would be forced to evict his government bungalow in New Delhi—at the behest of none other than the irrepressible Devi Lal.

Since the Tau wanted accommodation "suitable enough for the deputy prime minister", he called Shukla who occupied 1, Willingdon Crescent, considered to be one of the best houses on the presidential estate. When Devi Lal meaningfully talked of his unsuccessful hunt for a bigger house, Shukla took the hint. offering to vacate his house.

Within no time Shuklareceived an allotment order for a house on Tughlak Road, earlier occupied by another Madhya Pradesh politician,

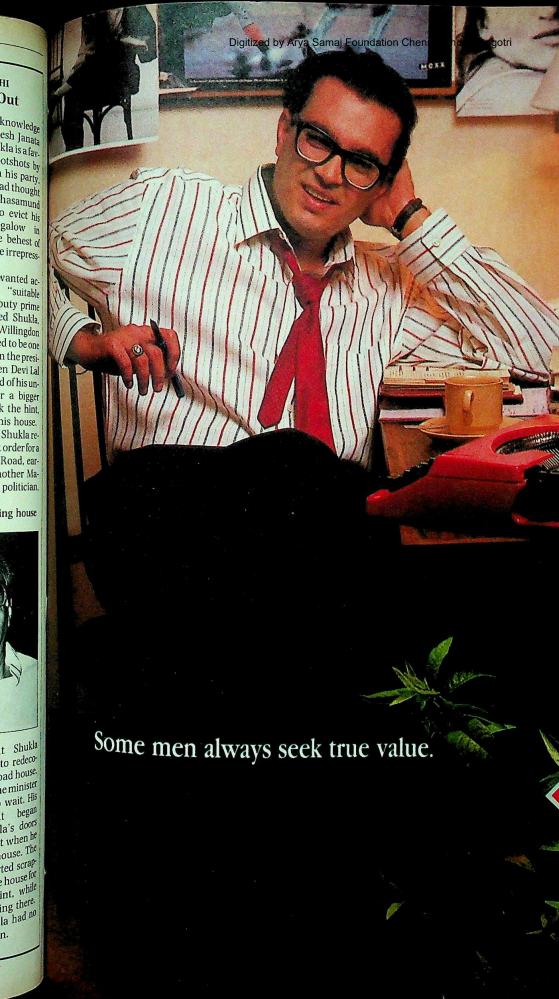
V.C. Shukla: moving house



Arjun Singh. But Shukla needed some time to redecorate the Tughlak Road house.

The deputy prime minister was in no mood to wait. His personal assistant began knocking at Shukla's doors everyday to find out when he would vacate the house. The civic staff even started scrap ing the plaster of the house for a fresh coat of paint, while Shukla was still living there.

A harried Shukla had no choice but to give in.



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— Managing Director.

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- General Manager.

That Plant Manager has been warned enough. The bearing company he recommended doesn't offer technical services at ali. How can our engineers fix these crazy bearings into the conveyor? I want his head on the block.

- Chief Engineer.

The Boss problem ordering upearing soful technic mainte support company

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N'HAT'S RUNNING SOME ORGANISATIONS. The Boss must go. The conveyor problem proves it. He should be

ordering us to deal with a reputed

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support ... Our present bearing company must go. And our Boss must go. - Plant Manager.

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THE BLIND

A New Vision

New devices bring hope to visually handicapped

"Iwant to become like Kapil Dev. I wish to bring honour to my country like he has.'

Vikas Sharma, nine-year-old student. "I want to be a cricketer when I grow up. Like Gavaskar. Oh, I adore him.'

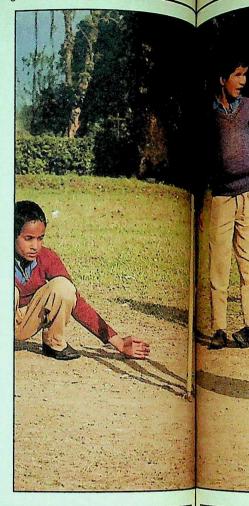
Kailash Joshi, eight-year-old student.

THESE dreams are like those of any young boy. But unlike others, who driven by their dreams get on to be little Kapil Devs and Sunil Gavaskars. Vikas and Kailash know that for them such aspirations are doomed to the realm of the unreal. Not that they lack the will to sustain their ambition. But simply because they are blind.

However, Vikas and Kailash, like many other blind boys across the country will now at least be able to play their version of cricket even if they are not able to become superheroes of the game. And that is thanks to the new cricket kit for the blind, developed in 1987 by the National Institute for Visually Handicapped (NIVH), Dehradun, which also runs the residential Model School where Vikas and Kailash study.

It's not just cricket that has captured the attention of researchers at NIVH and organisations like the National Association for the Blind and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. Pioneering work done by these organisations has helped open many doors for the blind, ridding them of their traumas, and narrowing the wedge that divides their lives from that of normal people. Examples: a walking stick with a gadget at the tip which sends signals about impediments, safety devices for installation in lathes, a computer which will give out synthesised speech instead of print-outs, a Braille stenography machine, specialised sewing machines, and talking books on classics.

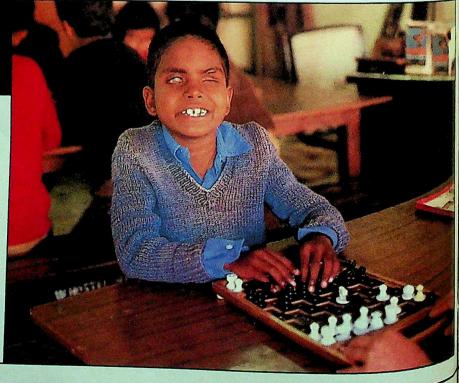
The cricket kit, in a way, symbolises the new discoveries that promise not just to usher in rays of light in an otherwise dark world, but also change the life-style of thousands of unfortunate blind people straitjacketed between a traumatic past and a gloomy future. Says Shanti Semwal, 10: "While playing cricket I forget that I cannot see. All my other senses are so keenly attuned to following the ball that

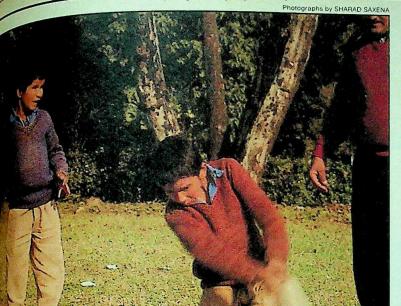


BHOLA SINGH

A 9-year-old student who has been blind since birth

he various games developed for us in my school are wonderful. While playing them, I get so interested that I am not aware of my blindness at all."





Playing with the new cricket kit

my lack of sight is forgotten."

Many other children feel the same way. The kit, which has become very popular in blind schools, has an audible ball made of unbreakable plastic. When thrown, the ball produces a distinct sound so that batsmen can hit it accurately and fielders know where it is going, and from which direction it is approaching them. The stumps are joined together so that blind players will not have problems fixing them at right angles to the ground. The middle stump has a battery operated switch which when pressed produces a beeping noise. This helps the bowler to identify the direction in which to bowl. And with these improvisions, blind boys can live their dreams.

The cricket kit is among the many recreational appliances for the blind developed during the last five years by the research and design department of NIVH. For instance, there is the table tennis kit consisting of a racquet with a doublehanded grip, and a table with planks at the edges to prevent the audible ball from falling off the table. Says Janaki Das, a 32year-old blind stenographer with a Delhi bank: "If we had such facilities when we were kids, many of our complexes would not have been there."

Says M.P. Sharma, design and development officer with NIVH: "We are also close to developing volleyball, football and basketball equipment for the blind."

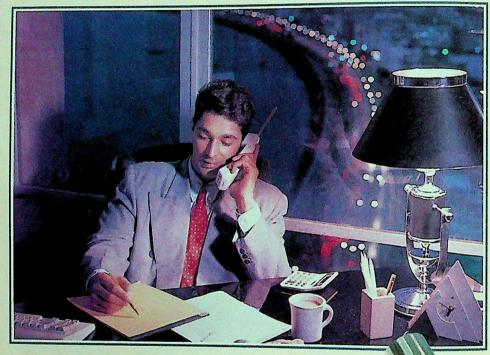


SOHAN SINGH

A 10-year-old partially blind student who is hopeful of getting cured

It's easy using the new maths kit that the teacher gave us. Learning mathematics with the new kit is like playing with a toy. It is wonderfully simple and fun."

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The tricky identify the by fixing be Beepers of a will have rings will a Mishra, ph Model Sch experiment ment devel ideaistoha the ones u blind kids well as any While embossed r

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The tricky problem of helping players the treatment of the solved by fixing beepers on the players' ankles. Beepers of all members of the same team Beepers of a distinct sound. Basketball ings will also have beepers. Says M.L. Mishra, physical instructor with the Model School and among the first to experiment with any new sports equipment developed by the institute: "Our idea is to have aids for the blind as close to the ones used by ordinary people. Our blind kids are using ordinary skates as well as any one else.

While playing cards with Braille embossed markings to tell the difference tional disturbances among the blind. Games help them realise that they are not lesser humans."

If outdoor sport is an outlet for their. frustrations, other new gadgets which help them read more and write better give them much-needed confidence. A new writing slate, developed under a Rs 8 lakh project, helps them write 40 per cent more of Braille matter on the same page. This not only conserves paper, but also makes writing of Braille faster. A safer stylus pen for writing in Braille, with a Braille eraser at the other end, has also been developed. Also being produced indigenously now are Braille

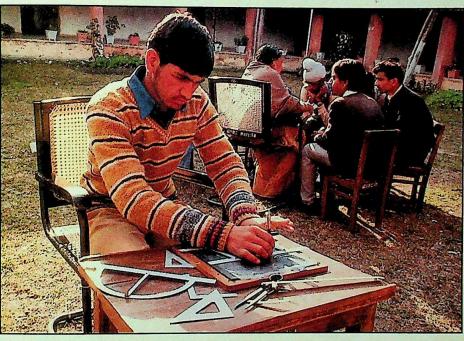
standard in Model School, nine-year-old Bhola Singh felt the big plastic box with his fingers and asked: "Mastersaab. what is this?" He found the Braille clock the most interesting. "This feels like the alarm clock my father uses." In ten minutes he had learned how to read the time. "Now I know exactly when Mahabharat will begin every Sunday."

A recently developed geometry device-which consists of a board, a protractor, a scale and a compass with a parallel line attachment-has come as yet another prop for the blind groping in dark world. Says 13-year-old Shailendra Kumar, who has mastered

UMESH KUMAR

A 16-year-old student who's a good skater despite being blind

no longer feel at a disadvantage with sighted students. Most educational aids have been improvised for our use."



have been around for years, it is in recent years that indoor games have been radically redesigned for the blind. For chess there is a wooden board with all the black squares raised. The pawns have to be fixed in holes on the squares. "I don't seem to be making the right moves all the time, but I love playing chess. I couldn't manage with the one at home because the pegs kept falling," Says Garima Kumsri, 12. Similarly, modilled draughts boards and square puzzles have been developed.

Development of sports kits and playing aids is one of the best things that ever happened to the blind," says Lal Adwani, director, research division of the National Society for Equal Opportunities for the Handicapped and president of the Asian Blind Union—who incidentally is blind himself. Agrees S.P. Bahuguna, head of the department of special education, NIVH: "The lack of recreational facilities was creating emoshorthand machines on which a trained blind person can take dictation as fast as a sighted person. Till about a year ago, this machine was being imported from the UK and West Germany.

TEW inventions have simplified the teaching of mathematics and science to the blind and given their life a new dimension. Last year, under a UNICEF project, a kit consisting of cubic rods, unit cubes, slide strips, number board, fractional strips, fraction discs, a Braille calendar, a Braille clock, geometrical shapes, a magnetic board for drawing various shapes with metal strips and a sorting tray was developed. And with such equipment, thousands of blind children in the country are comprehending key mathematical concepts according to the NCERT syllabus for primary classes.

The first day some of these devices were given to blind children of the 2nd the new algebra frame: "I can make all kinds of calculations on this. And as fast as my brother who can see.

The NIVH, whose projects are funded by the Central Ministry of Welfare and UNICEF, spends Rs 5,000 to Rs 1 lakh for prototypes which take them six months to two years to develop. The institutewhich has patented most of these inventions-mails brochures to all blind schools and institutes and also despatches the required quantity of equipment, made in their Dehradun factory, to those who order. The talking books, which are recorded in five or six languages and kept in the National Library for the Print Handicapped, can be sent postage-free to subscribers.

And as these devices gain popularity, the visually handicapped-1 per cent of India's population is blind-can stride confidently along the dark corridors of their world. And dare to reach for new horizons. -SHARMILA CHANDRA

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CLASSIC SELECTIO Because there's more to chocolates than chocolate SAURASHTRA

The Oil Sheikhs

Combining enterprise and unscrupulousness in equal measure, a group of entrepreneum has turned Saurashtra into the nation's groundnut oil capital.

ROUND half a century ago, a handful of small entrepreneurs in Gujarat's Saurashtra region took a close look at the groundnut. And where everyone else saw just a couple of white nuts in a rough shell, they saw business opportunities-and oodles of money. At the time, families were just beginning to experiment with groundnut oil as a cooking medium in place of til (sesame seed) oil. Sensing a potential market, the Gujarati businessmen sank their savings into a few oil mills. Since then, the profits have flowed in, first a trickle, then a flood-as smoothly as, well, groundnut oil.

Today, the groundnut oil mill owners of Saurashtra are called telia rajas, edible oil sheikhs. They own strings of cars and live in palatial mansions. Their children go to the best public schools. And they exert an overbearing influence on the region's politics.

As for Saurashtra itself, it dominates the country's groundnut oil market. The six districts which constitute the regionprincipal among them Rajkot, Jamnagar and Junagadh-account for nearly a third of the country's groundnut production. And the 600-odd oil mills and solvent extraction plants in Saurashtra boast a turnover of over Rs 1,000 crore in a good year. Not surprisingly, the region sets price trends for the entire industry.

Typically, the oil kings of today are second-generation descendants of the first entrepreneurs, many of whom were barely literate, others not at all. But each of them was street smart and might well have written a book titled: What they don't teach you at IIM, Ahmedabad.

The story that Naveenbhai Patel, 30, partner of the Rs40-crore Prabhat Solvent Industries, tells is a common one. Naveenbhai's father, a near illiterate.

began 34 years ago as a cotton tradernee Junagadh. By dint of hard work, he sand enough to set up a small oil mill. That se off an ascent to the top of the busines ladder. His sons have an easier time. San Naveenbhai: "We work sevendaysa week but I must admit that our generation not as hard-working as our father's."

Replace Naveenbhai with Maganbhai, Mohanbhai, Bipinbhai, Ishwarbha or a host of others, and you have the storn of Saurashtra's rise to prosperity in nutshell—a groundnut one, of course

But it's not just hard work that pavel the road to success. It was combined with an equal degree of unscrupulousness. Our charge against mill owners is that the evade payment of sales tax and other duties to the tune of crores of rupeessimply by selling truckloads of oil off the record. Says Mohanbhai Patel of the Rs& crore Arun Oil Industires: "Fifty per ten

gets out of through the ba Saurashtra' deikhs and & merchants have acused of sp creating artific tes to rig prices nggroundnut as at low pr toying up polit Just last (bimanbhai P after being sw Gujarat's chief was asked to co astatement by chairman, Nati Development (NDDB) that the in groundnut was because th had contribute cal parties. Pa the query.

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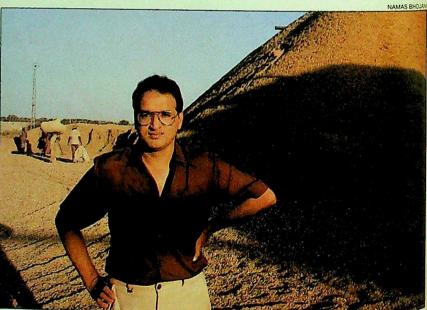
you have everyone' right from top official days, we s such a situ

MOHANBE KACHRAB of Arun Oil Dhoraji (ar turnover: F a first-gene entreprene exterior, he businessma century ag

ith the big money, our life-styles are fast changing. We are becoming more aristocratic. From farmers, we are turning into sethias.

ISHWARBHAI PATEL, 37, abandoned

medicine to join the family's groundnut oil business. Today, he and elder brother Damodarbhai run firms with a combined turnover of Rs 100 crore. Besides the Rs 16-crore Gujarat Oil and Allied Industries at Rajkot,



these include units turning out forgings, ghee, laminates, artificial leather cloth and plywood.

Their father, Jadhavjibhai,

began his career in 1945 in a grocery shop as a peon-cumclerk. From savings, he bought a small oil mill with four friends. eventually buying them out.

foil sold in the market out of factories though the backdoor." Saurashtra's the and groundnut gerhants have also been saused of speculation, maing artificial scarcito rig prices, purchasnggroundnut from farmes at low prices, and bying up politicians.

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Just last fortnight, (bimanbhai Patel, soon after being sworn in as Gujarat's chief minister, Ras asked to comment on astatement by V. Kurien. charman, National Dairy Board with Magan Development (NDDB) that the recent rise n groundnut oil prices was because the industry had contributed to politial parties. Patel ducked

> The groundnut oil ghost has long baunted Patel. In 1974, following a rise in alprices, students rose in revolt charging batChimanbhai Patel's government had ten bought up by mill owners. The protests escalated into the Nav Nirman agitation which ultimately resulted in



Lush green groundnut fields: sowing the seeds of prosperity for an entire region

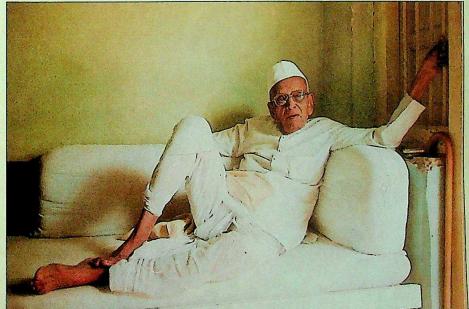
Chimanbhai's ouster.

The politician-oil king nexus is an infamous one. In the last assembly, there were over a dozen MLAs who virtually functioned as spokesmen for the oil lobby. Ishwarbhai Patel, a partner in the Rs 16crore Gujarat Oil and Allied Industries, Rajkot, says matter-of-factly: "We do provide funds to all political parties out of compulsion. We don't know who will come to power tomorrow."

Early this decade, however, the cosy relationship with the state's rulers was terminated-for a while, at least. Manoharsinhji Jadeja, a Congress(I) leader, who took over as Gujarat civil supplies

Lhese days, you have to grease everyone's palmsright from the peon to top officials. In the early days, we seldom faced such a situation. 💯

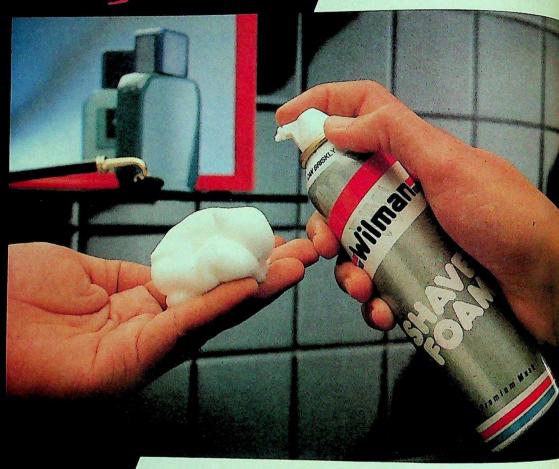
MOHANBHAI KACHRABHAI PATEL ^{of Arun} Oil Industries in ^{Dhoraji} (annual turnover: Rs 8 crore) is a first-generation edible oil entrepreneur. Behind a benign exterior, he is a shrewd businessman. Around half a century ago, he was a cotton



trader. Then, he set up a small oil mill with savings of Rs 15,000. In 1937, he set up a mill in Pakistan, then sold it to establish a new one at Karnataka.

Though his business has prospered, the "grand old man of the Saurashtra oil industry" continues to hanker for the good, old days.

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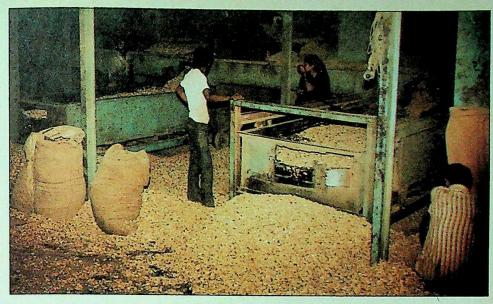
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minister in 1980, implemented a series of stiff measures, including a ban on movement of oil outoil the state. Within the space of a week, oil prices rashed—from Rs 13 a kg pRs8. In 1985, however, Jadeja was denied a ticket. And last year, things again turned rosy for the oil sheikhs when the Amarsinh Chaudhary goremment withdrew the restrictions that Jadeja had imposed in 1981.

But while politicians can be manipulated, the weather cannot. And with four droughts in seven years, the oil sheikhs have decided that it's not safe to keep all their eggs in the groundnut

basket. So they've been diversifying. Ishwarbhai Patel's firm, for instance (see box). Once solely dependent on groundnut, today it draws just a sixth of its earnings from oil.

Companies are also modernising. Bipinbhai Shah's Rs 40-crore Tajmoti Oilhas installed computers. Families too are changing. The old dhoti-clad, bidi-



Decorticating division in a groundnut oil mill: charges of selling through the backdoor

smoking pioneers have given way to an urbane English-speaking generation.

Nevertheless, the immediate future may be bumpy. To break the monopoly of the traders and the oil mills, the NDDB has taken up largescale procurement of groundnut and, recently, began marketing groundnut oil at prices that the industry complains will throttle it.

That may be an exaggeration. But if the board succeeds, the groundnut oil industry will have to learn to live with leaner margins. The alternative is to diversify more rapidly. Nevertheless, if the oil kings can consider that option at all, it's because their empire rests on solid economic foundations-metaphorically at least. -UDAY MAHURKAR

efore we got independence, only princes went to the Raj Kumar College. Today, Patels of the top oil families outnumber others.

BIPINBHAI SHAH, 37, is the only important non-Patel among the oil sheikhs of Saurashtra. His father started out as an ordinary ghee seller. Then, he and his brother set up an oil That was 27 years ago,



and ever since, the family has been swimming in money.

Today, the Tajmoti Oil Mill, with an annual turnover of over Rs 40 crore, boasts of

the highest output of labelled oil products. And the family has a lot to show for it: opulent mansions, a lavish lifestyle, over a dozen cars.

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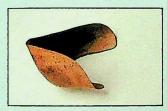
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REVERSING COLONIALISM

The Industries Ltd. Does that name ring a bell? Probably not to many observers of the Indian corporate scene. But the company, formerly known as Indian Fine Blank, has drawn up extremely ambitious plans for itself. Set up by Calcutta-based first-generation entrepreneur and technocrat Bijon Nag in 1977, this engineering company increased its turnover tenfold from Rs 2.5 crore to Rs 25 crore between 1984 and 1987. Along the way, it promoted eastern India's first machine tools plant in West Bengal. Then it acquired two sick tea gardens in the state, revived them and set up an agro-based chemicals unit. IFB has now established two new manufacturing units—one at Bangalore for seating systems and seat recliners for Maruti cars and another at Goa for fully automated washing-machines in collaboration with West German bigwig Bosch. The group turnover is expected to more than treble from the present level of Rs 50 crore five years from now.

Now comes the clincher: Nag has now applied to the Government for permission to set up a Rs 8-crore plant in England, to be ready by year-end, to produce 'safety-critical' engineering components for passenger cars. Significantly, not only does IFB Industries propose to hold majority shares in this venture, but it also intends supplying almost the entire capital equipment for the British concern from its units here. Somewhat like reversing the history of colonialism?

GOING GLOBAL

The ailing computers division of DCM Ltd, DCM Data Products, wants to make up for lost time and go global in a hurry. It recently entered into agreements with US companies, Silicon Valley Technology and Capricorn, to sell is chip technology. Negotiations are also under way with other US concerns like Texas Instruments, Dell and Spear. Further, global software giant Microsoft has sub-contracted the designing of part of an operating system to the company. In addition, DCM is setting up a joint venture with the Singapore-based Multitech to produce attendance recorders and other products. The Indian company will provide technology while Multitech will be responsible for the marketing functions. DCM is also investing Rs 10 crore to relocate its existing unit in a congested part of Delhi to Dundahera in Haryana.

CONVERSION HITCH

OR some time now, Indian hotel chains have been pleading with the Government to permit them to quote room tariff rates to foreign tourists in US dollars and not in rupees. The reason is obvious: though hotels have been priodically hiking their rates, they find that they lose out when their rupee earnings are converted into dollars. And this is because the value of the rupee vis-a-vis the dollar and other hard currencies has been depreciating much faster than the speed at which hotel charges have been hiked. Their representation is with the Finance Ministry. Will North Block oblige?

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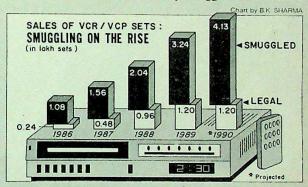
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HE Bank of America plans to aggressively market a number of new services. Like Citibank and ANZ Frince loans for the purchase of consumer durables. Then it capital, The bank is evidently delighted that its Foreign million (over Rs 500 crore) in six months and are expected to transches will be hooked up to its global computer link.

VIDEO VILLAINY

HE rapid spread of the video revolution is taking its toll on the nation's economy. For every video cassette recorder or player which is legitimately sold in India, three or more sets are clandestinely smuggled in. This is the



conclusion of a study conducted by a Delhi-based company Krisons Electronic Systems Ltd, which assembles and sells roughly one-fourth of the 1.2 lakh vca and vcp sets legally marketed in the country. The study claims that while legal sales are expected to stagnate this year, smuggling will continue to rise (see chart), particularly across the Bangladesh and Nepal borders. According to the company's calculations, the exchequer is losing over Rs 250 crore a year by way of excise duty, sales tax and customs duty.

BANKERS' BASH

In the first week of May, some 3,000 of the best and the brightest among international bankers will assemble in New Delhi for the annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The bank's assistance to India has been on the rise in the last few years, but the real reason for holding the annual meeting in the capital seems different: to size up the new Government's economic policies. Last year, soon after the ADB held its annual jamboree in Beijing, the Tianamen Square massacre took place. Since then, the global banking community's interest in China has waned somewhat, while its interest in India has increased.

Trouble at the Top

Institutions ease out the chief executive they had selected

PUNJA will have to cease to be chairman. -Excerpt from a statement by R.P. Srivastava, chief general manager, State Bank of India (SBI), before the Board for Financial and Industrial Reconstruction (BIFR) on January 29.

UST a month after these dramatic words were recorded, on March 2, the Unit Trust of India (UTI)—the largest institutional shareholder in Nirlon Ltd-sent a terse two-line letter to the company's chairman and managing director, M.R.B. Punja, informing him that he had been removed from his post. The news rocked Bombay's staid banking community. In an unprecedented move, state-owned financial institutions had eased out the very man they had sponsored as chief executive to head the

Rs 156-crore ailing synthetic yarn and nylon manufacturing company.

The irony was all too apparent. An erstwhile chairman of the country's largest financial institution, the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), Punja had been pulled out of retirement to nurse the sick Nirlon to health, Barely two years later, he had become persona non grata with his former godfathers.

The latest act in the Nirlon drama comes at a time when government bodies are unsure about how the company-which has accumulated losses exceeding Rs 110 crore-can be revived. Besides Punja, and officials of SBI, UTI, IDBI and BIFR, the dramatis personae include a host of Indian and foreign banks and two former managing directors of Nirlon, Virenchee V. Sagar and Manhar Bhagat. One big happy family? Hardly:

The banks and institutions have accused Sagar and Bhagat, the promoters, of turning the company sick. And they are bitter

about Punja's performance as well. "I could have resigned. But I preferred to be removed," retorts Punja. Highly placed banking sources say he was asked to leave because he had 'bitter personality clashes' with senior IDBI and SBI officials.

When Punja was appointed Nirlon's chairman in May 1988, the company's finances were in a precarious stateoutstanding debts stood at nearly Rs 200 crore; the annual interest burden was Rs 26 crore; and Nirlon was in the red by Rs 42 crore. SBI and IDBI were expected to put together a rehabilitation package before BIFR. Till then, Punja's mandate was to run the company.

If the attempts to revive the concern were not troublesome enough, worse was to follow. The company's main banker, SBI, felt Punja was not consulting the

wich last years are. The compa nominees of institutions and banks onthe consortium of board of directors before taking cross Rogkong Bank decisions and was bypassing set prog Ty 1988, IDBI dures. Replies Punja: "I thought my difference was to clean the balance sheet by sebanks to Wi unfortunately, procedures took procedures er cent of the dence over performance." rore the co

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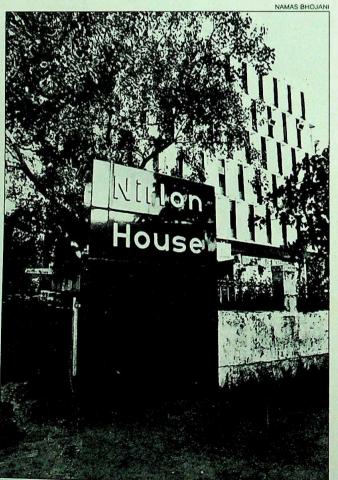
The first clash came in August 196 when sBI nominee and the then finance director, C.B Phadnis, quit three months after being deputed to the compan Phadnis advanced 'personal reasons' an banks to red quitting, but observers say he was with drawn by sBI as Punja repeatedly con plained against him. Curiously, Phadni successor, P.V. Rao, was appointed a year

During the hearings before the sin SBI officials alleged that Rao was give very little powers in Nirlon and that Pur-

finalised the company's counts (for the 18-month period ended March 198 without consulting him. his defence, Punja saysth company's accounts was finalised four days before Rao's appointment. Buts has other grouses against him.

Nirlon's wage agree ment with its union ha expired in December 198 The union, which repr 2,600 sents pushed for a fresh wa package when Punja came chairman. Negoti tions started in Janua 1989, but there was a dea lock. The union then struck work for 45 days in midwhich reportedly results in a Rs 10-crore loss. Pull contends that at an interinstitutional meeting, hen ceived 'oral' approval take a 'management de sion' to settle with union. Subsequently, Pu ja negotiated a Rs 2-m annual wage increase the strike was called of Rs 12 crore SBI has now taken

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ming at the wage settlement. Punja that he was "well within his deal with the union" were to deal with the union". BIFR rials have contended that since the ampany is sick, its workers are expected

make sacrifices. Nirlon's outstanding debt at the end of urchlastyear stood at a stunning Rs 206 nd banksont antinum of foreign banks included taking the company owes Rs 81.5 crore to 1000sortium of foreign banks, including ingkong Bank and Citibank. Since Jan-1988, IDBI has been appealing to

webanks to write off 70 er cent of their loans. is it is felt, would imthe company's ances of revival. In late-99. Punja signed a morandum of underganding with several fory he was with an banks to reduce their to Rs 18.4 crore. Whon has already paid 3 3.62 crore to these ppointedaya

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Meanwhile, SBI chaland the settlement that the claims Indian nationalised aks—around Rs 24

me, with sur's own exposure being a ate Rs 3 crore—were not considered at bythe company. But Punja justifies the thement, saying the loan write-off by rign banks would reduce Nirlon's acmulated losses from Rs 110 crore to of crore. "If this is not done, the mpany can never be viable." he says. Another serious charge levelled by against Punja is that last year, Nirlon posited some Rs 25 crore in an acant with the Bank of India without sknowledge or consent. According the rules, a debtor company should deposit its surplus funds in banks have lent it money. In a note walated to Nirlon directors last fortthe company pleads guilty to charge of having kept funds in a n-consortium' bank. This move s initiated because Punja feared a sal could, at short notice, stop anding facilities to the company. starving it of its basic retements of working capital. It san indication of the extent to th the relationship between the pany and its lead bank had

The other major scandal per-15 to Nirlon's promoter direc-Sagar and Bhagat, owing State Res 12 crore to the company Store to the compas controlled by them. Last year, by them. Last year, a special audit of Nirlon's

transactions with these associate companies. The audit report by the chartered accountants' firm, Haribhakti and Co, is believed to have unearthed several procedural lapses, but could not pinpoint gross financial irregularities.

Till the end of last month, two associate companies controlled by Sagar had repaid the principal amount due to Nirlon (Rs 2.28 crore). However, Bhagat's companies, which owe the company a staggering Rs 9.98 crore, have not yet cleared

their dues. Bhagat has told the BIFR "that a proposal for payment of dues has been submitted to Nirlon and (it) is linked to further job work to be entrusted to Nirfabrics"—an associate company he controls. This company is also going slow in vacating part of the space it occupied in Nirlon's head office.

"What is strange is that the two individuals (Sagar and Bhagat) who were most responsible for the downfall of the company are still continuing on its board

of directors," remarks a government official. He claims that Punja has been 'soft' on these two and had told BIFR that initiating legal action against them would be self-defeating. There are reports that Sagar and Bhagat were close to the Rajiv government and even expected to manage the company by end-1991. With a new government in power in Delhi, equations have changed. IDBI Chairman S.S. Nadkarni is now ex-

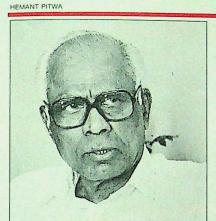
pected to decide whether the two should be re-appointed on the board.

Punja claims that Nirlon will make a "remarkable turnaround" this year. Few people, however, share his enthusiasm. In the first six months of 1989-90, the company lost Rs 14.33 crore on sales of Rs45 crore. Still, there was some improvement on account of the market for polyester and nylon filament yarn and tyre-cord picking up.

But Nirlon's headaches are far from over. It owes some Rs 75 crore to banks, besides fixed-deposit and debenture holders, and it will have to cough up Rs 8.5 crore to the customs authorities if it is to lift a brand new tyre-cord plant which has been gathering cobwebs inside a Bombay port godown for over three years.

Above all, there are doubts about when the company's financial rehabilitation package will be formally cleared by BIFR. The board is said to be unhappy with the first technoeconomic report on the company submitted by IDBI and has asked it to prepare a fresh report. Finally, the biggest question remains: who will manage Nirlon? Sources say that a hunt is on to find a chief executive who will take over from the two SBI nominees who are managing Nirlon at present. But time is clearly running out.

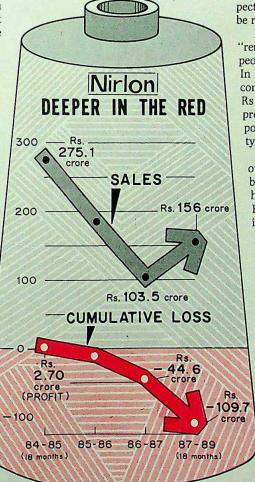
-S.N. VASUKI with bureau reports



he SBI felt Punja was not consulting the banks and institutions before taking crucial decisions.

Punja: under attack

Chart by B.K. SHARMA



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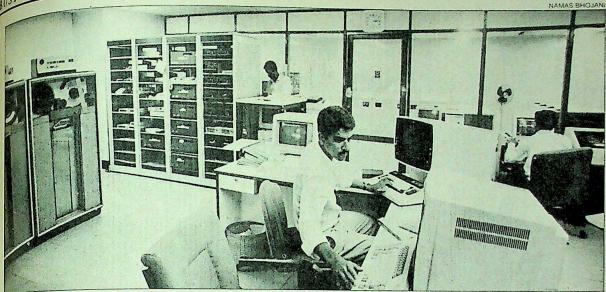
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Controversial Growth

The company emerges as key player in the industry

T'Scorporate head office looks like an art gallery-in fact, part of it is one. Paintings by Francis Souza and Ganesh Pyne adorn the walls. The decor is strictly ethnic, complete with cane chairs and durries. Directors mingle with young executives in open work spaces which aim at blurring hierarchies. The canteen food comes free.

In a country crowded by inefficient Public sector organisations, the stateowned computer giant CMC Ltd (formerly Computer Maintenance Corporation)stands out. Set up in 1975 primarily to maintain imported computers, CMC hasexpanded rapidly into a Rs 105-crore organisation which is engaged in multifarious areas of information technology, unkey projects and software develop-

Last month, CMC bagged a prestiglous contract to computerise the operations of Felixstoe Port in London in the lace of stiff competition from many soft-Ware firms such as Logica and Cap. It is also planning to acquire an American Company to serve as a springboard for its whware exports and has plans for a European subsidiary as well. "Our stratfay for the '90s is to become truly says company Chairman P.P.

Over the last few weeks, CMC has been trying to get a host of private Indian Companies to form consortia which tould jointly bid for software projects abroad. Director A.M. Mirani says the company will bid for a project to computerise the forthcoming Mediterranean Games. Further, CMC is negotiating with the governments of three countries to market its finger-print identification system which has already been installed in India.

Pretty good going by Indian public sector standards. But that's only one side of the story. The other side is that CMC has been periodically accused of using its clout in the Government to browbeat its rivals in the private sector to obtain undue advantages for itself.

However, even its most ardent critics today agree that, over the years, CMC

has metamorphosed from a company maintaining imported computers to one involved in diverse activities. The result: turnover is currently more than 10 times the measly Rs 10 crore recorded in 1981-82. The company's tribe of talented computer professionals has swollen from a mere 18 in 1977 to around 2,000 at present.

Among the important projects executed in the recent past is the centralised passenger reservation system for the Indian Railways. Then the Indonet computers at CMC: few takers

company was awarded the Rs 10-crore contract to computerise the working of the container terminal at Nhava Sheva Port near Bombay, in the process pipping a galaxy of rivals-including the Tatas and ICL—to the finishing line.

Not surprisingly, the competition is green with envy. CMC's virtual monopoly over all major computerisation projects involving the Government and the public sector has raised the hackles of its rivals. Says an irate spokesman of a leading association of computer manufacturers: "CMC has eaten up the private sector's share of the domestic market-it seems it does not believe in free competition." But this spokesman, like most of CMC's critics, would prefer to be unnamed. For the company is a key player in the Indian computer industry which others would not like to antagonise.

Last year CMC was embroiled in

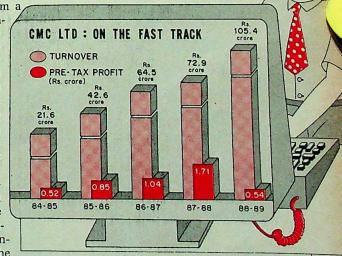
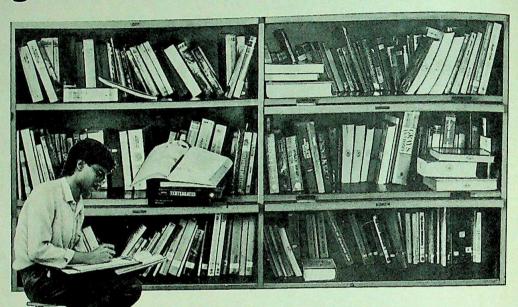


Chart by B.K. SHARMA

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It is also alleged that the company used arm-twisting tactics to be retained

as a consultant for the country's bank compuprogramme. terisation Private companies claim that CMC "tailored" the tender for imports in a manner in which it mainly benefited a single American company.

CMC chief Gupta replies that these allegations are without basis. "We won the contracts simply because we were betterno favours were showered onus just because we are a public sector organisation," he claims. In order to bolster his contention, Gupta adds that CMC has

also lost out on other contracts, including public sector ones like the computerisation project for Vayudoot. Unlike our rivals, we're not complaining," he remarks.

TILL, such arguments do not convince CMC's competitors. They point to the way the company has realously guarded its monopoly on maintenance of imported computer equipment. Barely two years after CMC wassetup, in 1977, the US multinational and the country in a huff and the company was given the responsibility of maintaining IBM computers which had been already installed. Later, during Gupta's stewardship as secretary, DOE, between 1981 and 1984, the Govern-Ment issued a notification by which all foreign computers in the country had to be maintained either by CMC or inlouse. This decision ensured that a dent Was not made on CMC's monopoly of the tomputers maintenance business.

Interestingly, this move was oplosed even by a section of the top brass in the department. The then DOE additional secretary N. Seshagiri had openly objected to the Government notification and suggested that computer maintenance activities be opened out to the private sector. But Seshagiri's objections were not considered.

Gupta, naturally, has a different point of view. "It's monopoly in reverse-we have no choice but to maintain any imported computer system bought into India." He adds that CMC is currently maintaining computers produced by as many as 16 different international companies which "forces" it to keep large inventories.

Gupta may have a point there, but what cannot be disputed is that a substantial chunk of CMC's revenue comes

link did not come through, he adds. CMC has now decided to invest an additional Rs 70 crore in upgrading the network, which had been deferred for lack of demand. A global tender has been floated for a new computer. CMC is also negotiating with database organisations like the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy to make their information services available to users of the network.

Many who were closely associated with the Indonet project say that CMC failed to fulfil targets primarily because of its inability to market the system well. Even Gupta admits that the company is less oriented towards marketing and more concerned about technology. The

 C_{MC} Chairman Gupta denies the company uses armtwisting tactics to win contracts.



out of maintenance of computers. For instance, last year the company earned as much as Rs 23 crore from maintaining imported computer systems, which was around one-fourth of its total turnover.

Its dependence on this area is unlikely to diminish drastically. A reason for this is that a number of important CMC projects are yet to take off. Consider, for example, the case of Indonetthe country's first inter-city computerised network for commercial usewhich was inaugurated with much fanfare in 1986. The company sunk more than Rs 10 crore on this project only to find that there were very few takers. Worse, certain potential clients like Grindlays opted out after having evinced interest in Indonet.

Result: instead of an expected revenue of Rs 60 crore from the project, CMC earned only Rs 18 crore from Indonet last year. Says S. Krishnamurti, executive director, corporate marketing: "We realised that the country still does not understand networking." Besides, the computing power of the Indonet system was limited and the expected satellite company exported only Rs 54 lakh of software in 1988-89-a paltry sum in comparison to the vast potential that remains untapped. CMC has also not met with much success in selling items like automatic railway ticketing machines and telex terminals. Sales of specialised products fell from Rs 1.24 crore in 1987-88 to Rs 1 crore last year.

The company's much-publicised involvement in the CLASS (Computer Literacy and Studies in Schools) project has flopped for other reasons. Laments Krishnamurti: "The investment in CLASS during the seventh plan period (1985-90) was supposed to be Rs 300 crore but the actual investment is going to be a mere Rs 20 crore."

Such setbacks notwithstanding, CMC does not desist from dreaming. The company plans to get into an important new area-a disaster management system to help predict floods. And also do its bit to popularise the use of computers in rural areas. But if these grand plans remain pipe-dreams, the company is certain to face more flak than it has so far. -SURAJEET DAS GUPTA FERTILISERS

Joining Hands

RCF to take over MCF

I'S a most unusual take-over bid. The buyer: a profitable Rs 1,244-crore public sector behemoth, Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilisers (RCF), one of the largest fertiliser companies in India. The target: an ailing Karnataka government undertaking, the Rs 227-crore Mangalore Chemicals and Fertilisers (MCF). What is out of the ordinary is that there has been no official pressure to saddle a healthy concern with a loss-making one. The take-over was by mutual consent.

Last fortnight, RCF announced that it will be acquiring a 46-per cent stake in MCF, which had accumulated losses exceeding Rs 33 crore till March last year. The company's losses have mounted since. RCF has proposed that it will infuse fresh capital into MCF and work out a rehabilitation package with financial institutions. Says RCF Chairman and Managing Director R. Venkatesan: "We are enthusiastic about the take-over.'

RCF was a late entrant in the race to grab McF. Since 1988, take-over tycoon

Manu Chhabria and liquor baron Vijay Mallya were reportedly running neckto-neck to control the company sending the price of MCF's Rs 10 share soaring to Rs 56 that year—it is currently quoting at Rs 17. Sources in financial institutions say that RCF entered the fray when the Karnataka Government (both during the Janata regime and under Governor's rule) wanted a public sector, not a private sector, partner for MCF. Reason: privatising the company would have been politically controversial.

So for RCF, the acquisition of 46 per cent of MCF's equity became a virtual cakewalk. Though RCF spokesmen refuse to disclose the purchase price, market observers calculate that the amount will be around Rs 10 crore. Which is peanuts for a company like RCF which last year reported a net profit of Rs 70 crore and had cash reserves of Rs 258 crore. And what RCF is likely to pay the Karnataka Government for MCF's shares does not seem too high given the Mangalore company's Rs 88 crore asset base, its surplus land and its easy access to the port.

But turning MCF around will not be simple. Plagued by low rates of capacity utilisation and chronic power and water shortages, its profit margins have shrunk over the last three years. After

the 1987 drought, fertiliser stocks mounted and manufacturers indulged in price-cutting, MCF was among the companies badly hit during this period.

RCF officials estimate that MCF needs around Rs 110 crore of fresh funds to revive. Informed sources say that RCF's contribution in the form of equity and loans will be some Rs 50 crore. The balance is expected to come from the financial institutions. If such a revival package is approved, RCF sources feel that MCF can come out of the red "within three years".

The RCF-MCF combine has the potential of becoming a formidable player in the Indian fertiliser market. RCF has selfish reasons to make the partnership a success. It is difficult for the company to expand its two plants at Bombay due to opposition from environmentalists. So, the acquisition of MCF will enable it to gain a foothold in the south. As a senior executive in a rival company argues: "Both companies can pool their marketing resources thereby cutting costs."

Above all, the take-over fits neatly into RCF's ambitious growth plans which were unveiled last month. It intends investing a huge Rs 1,500 crore in the next five years on various schemes. And with MCF in its fold, RCF certainly seems to be on fertile ground. —s.n. vasuki

PHARMACEUTICALS

Sour Taste

IDPL is under scrutiny

ONTROVERSY is not new to the Rs 200-crore Indian Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Limited (IDPL) the country's largest public sector drug company. Last month, IDPL was again caught in the harsh glare of adverse publicity as a volley of allegations against it from MPs and disgruntled sections of the company's 12,600 employees descended on the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals. Confronted with such allegations Minister M.S. Gurupadaswamy agreed to conduct an inquiry into IDPL's affairs.

In the hot seat is IDPL's Chairman and Managing Director K. Venkataramanan. One of the charges against him is that he got IDPL to vacate the building where it had its Delhi office even after the company won a case against the building's owner. The innuendo: the chairman struck an underhand deal with the landlord. Venkataramanan, however. claims

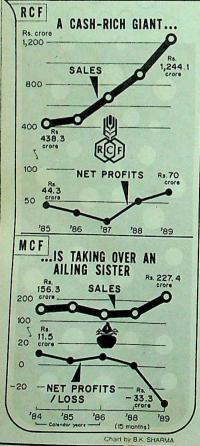
that he was repeat-

he Government has been deluged by complaints of financial and other irregularities about the public sector

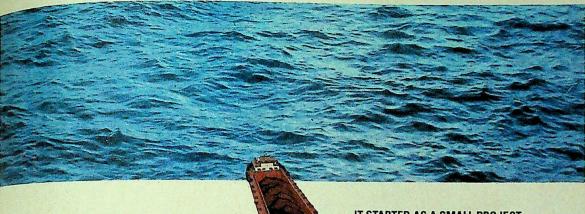
pharmaceutical giant.

edly instructed by the former ministered state R.K. Jaichandra Singh to vacate the premises. "In fact, I stalled as long as possible," he says.

But there are other doubtful transactions. IDPL's decision to import 100 tonnes of the basic drug tetracycline last July was according to allegations not above board. The consignment was purchased at \$25.40 (Rs 420) a kg through a West German dealer and not directly from the Chinese manufacturer, which quoted a rate of \$22.60 (Rs 373). Venkataramanan counters that Chinese counters nese supplies are unreliable. His detractions have tors, however, claim that he deliberately created a shortage of tetracycline by



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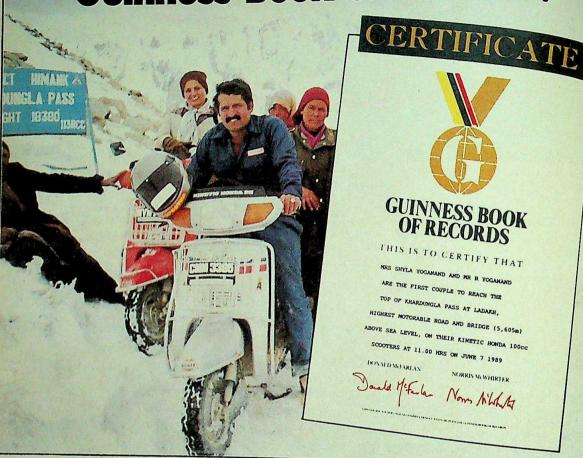




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Another feather in the cap for Kinetic Honda.

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stabily decreasing IDPL's production though 1988. The chairman's defence:

thortage of raw materials. Other allegations of financial 'misappopration' relate to the diversion of apital funds (approved by Parliament) for revenue expenditure. A ministry oficial says that such diversion takes place in other public sector bodies as rell even if it is not considered strictly thical Unable to pump funds into a company with accumulated losses of over Rs300 crore, on an equity base methird the amount, the ministry is apparently willing to turn a Nelson's eye p this kind of financial jugglery.

Venkataramanan has also been accused of appointing relatives of a numberolCongress(I) leaders as commission agents for IDPL in various states. Some of the appointments are indeed strange. The Maharashtra agency was given to a Nellore-based dealer who had no office in Bombay. This agent then subcontracted the deal to a Bombay firm which had earlier been denied the agency by DPL. The Nellore dealer's cut: 37.5 per cent of the commission.

A war of attrition between Venkataramanan and a large section of the employees has steadily grown since he was appointed in mid-1986. Venkataramanan's bete noire has been IDPL's marketing division, particularly the 300-odd medical representatives who are supposed to push the company's products with doctors.

Venkataramanan himself sees the opposition as a consequence of his stern assault on "vested interests". He estimates that 30 per cent of the medical representatives have other occupaions—many are running their own shops—and file false reports of work done for the company. Having worked or 29 years in the multinational ICI, Venkataramanan says he infused commercialism into a pampered public seclororganisation. "It used to run like a set of separate empires. The marketing divison couldn't be bothered about what the production department was doing and production had no idea what the market needed," he says.

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Venkataramanan claims that he has already begun to turn the company around. Had it not been for the Rs 15 tore compulsory provision for gratuity Payments and a Rs 29-crore outgo on de-Reciation and interest, IDPL would have

hadea cash profit of Rs 2 crore last year. Butthough he sounds upbeat about the future, the beleaguered chairman has a lot of convincing to do at the hinistry before he can afford to plan too -DAVID DEVADAS

FINANCE

New Haven

Boom in mutual funds

ONARCHS of the global money bazaar, merchant bankers and fund managers with billions of dollars at their disposal, are increasingly viewing India as a safe haven to park funds. The country's relatively insular financial system and steadily buoyant capital markets offer much advantages. The method: offshore mutual funds.

The modus operandi is simple. Indian firms in conjunction with big names in the US and Europe financial fraternity raise money abroad from institutions controlling large pension funds, besides individual NRIs. This is

Among small private firms, Champaklal Investment & Financial Consultancy (CIFCO) was one of the earliest to float an offshore fund. Canara Bank is now giving finishing touches to its US \$ 120 million (Rs 200 crore) fund with Banque Indo-Suez. And many more will follow.

Typically, while the foreign partner mobilises funds abroad, the Indian concern utilises them at home. Says CIFCO head Bhupen Dalal: "Given the depreciating rupee and high rates of taxation here, it is crucial that Indian partners are knowledgable about market conditions so they can maximise returns for investors overseas." And given India's foreign exchange crunch, the prospects of raising equity capital abroad has its own attractions. "Offshore mutual funds have inherent advantages as the cost of raising equity may be lower than the cost of taking a loan in the short-run,"



Parande: "good timing"

Pherwani: "inherent advantages"

invested in Indian stock-markets and the values of such offshore mutual fund instruments are often listed on overseas stock exchanges.

"The timing is excellent," crows S.M. Parande, executive director, SBI Capital Markets, the merchant banking subsidiary of State Bank of India (sві). Не adds that foreign mutual funds have started flowing in at a time when the country's capital markets have been through "their best growth phase yet".

The mid-'80s belonged to the stateowned Unit Trust of India (иті) and sві which, along with world bigwigs Merrill Lynch and Morgan Stanley, mopped up over US \$ 400 million (Rs 600 crore) from global money markets. The '90s, it seems, will see more and more private Indian concerns take up the challenge.

The Modis, Birlas, Mahindras, among others, have hopped on to the fundwagon. So have banks like Grindlays, Citibank and Canara Bank. says uri Chairman M.J. Pherwani.

But not all are enamoured of offshore mutual funds. "Under existing Indian laws, none of these funds are real mutual funds in the international sense-they are acting like investment companies which collect money abroad and invest it in local securities," says R.K. Piparaiya, managing director, Aridhi Investment Consultants Ltd. Still, he agrees this kind of business is certain to boom: "By 1995 I expect there will be at least a hundred such funds in the country."

Although the amount of money coming into India this way is very small in relation to the size of global money markets, industry analysts agree that a beginning has been made. And since domestic mutual funds remain the sole preserve of nationalised banks and financial institutions, efforts of private Indian companies and foreign banks will perforce remain focused on offshore mutual funds. -SHIV TANEJA

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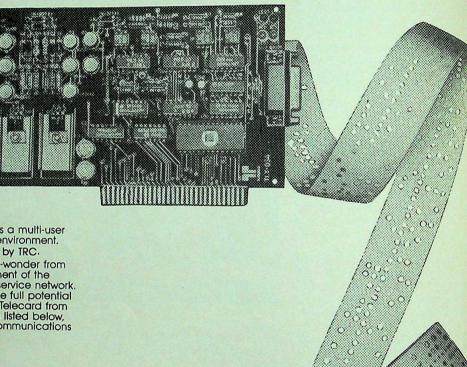
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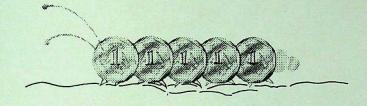
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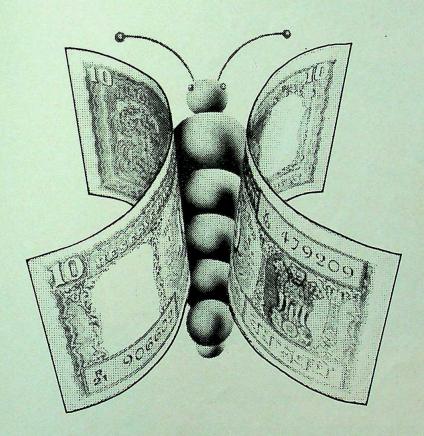


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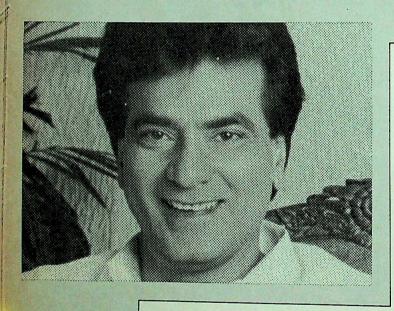
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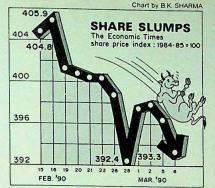
THE MARKETS lying Low ent, fruitful year

Pre-budget mood subdued

Sbudget day drew near, the country's capital markets entered a hase of introspection. Neither be bulls nor the bears could gain an oper hand. Share indices fluctuated, but far less than in January and Februay. The news of the Congress(I) getting puted in the assembly elections helped bost investor sentiments for a while.

But only a while. For, by early March, scrip values again started coming down. One reason: on March 5, Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate told the parliamentary consultative committe attached to his ministry that the Government would mop up excess liquidity in the economy—around &10,000 crore—to reduce inflationary pressures. The statement aroused apprehensions of a tighter squeeze on credit to industry and trade which, in um, could curb corporate profits.

However, the markets did not panic. Share price movements were confined to anarrow band. This was, to some extent,



expected, since the volume of trading in major stock-markets had declined considerably as it does before the announcement of budget proposals. Equity values ambled along, with regular brokers, investors and financial institutions wary of making major commitments.

The 30-scrips sensitive index of the Bombay Stock Exchange recovered ground from 674.47 on February 20 to 692.59 on March 1, before dipping to 685.88 four days later. One reason why the index rose late last month was the improvement in the price of the Tata Steel share-which has a substantial weight-from Rs 105 to Rs 112.75, following speculation about the Government decontrolling the steel industry. But such rumours were short-lived and the Tata Steel scrip gained by only Rs 3.25 in the course of last fortnight.

The Economic Times all-India share index slid by more than seven pointsfrom 400.8 on February 20 to 393.3 on March 6. The level was marginally higher than the low of 392.4 touched on the last day of February.

During late-February and early-March, banks and companies reportedly sold units valued at over Rs 400 crore back to the Unit Trust of India. Many feared that the budget would remove tax concessions on unit holdings. On the positive side, Canara Bank's issue of its 'Candouble' mutual fund instrumentwhose value is slated to double in five-and-a-half years time-mopped up Rs 250 crore from the market, five times higher than the target set.

Market sentiments were also boosted by the encouraging half-yearly results of companies like Indian Rayon, Oswal Agro Mills, Sterlite Industries and Modipon. The scrips of shipping companies also looked up.

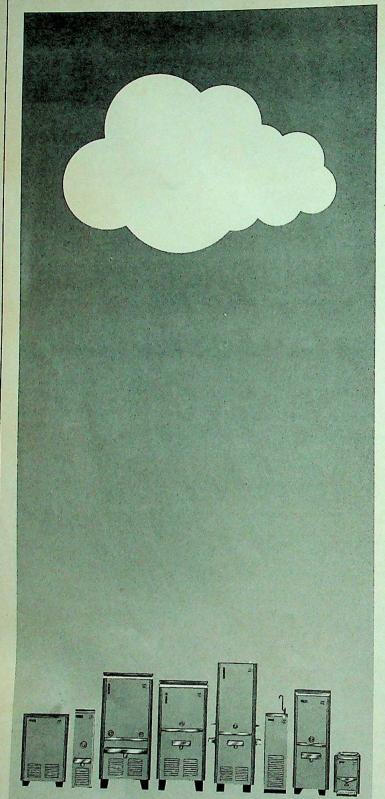
All in all, market observers felt that though the coming budget would bring a fresh dose of taxes, the Government would not do anything drastic to dampen the mood of the share markets.

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Enarat Forge 93.75	85.00	92.50	1.25	+	Lipton112.00	84.00	86.50	nil	
Bombay D 66.00	50.50	53.50	1.50	_	LML Ltd21.00	15.00	16.50	1.00	-
Entannia 1 231.00	178.00	182.50	5.50	-	Madura Coats 111.00	100.50	108.00	nil	
119.00	97.00	104.00	1.00	_	Mahindra & Mahindra 103.00	67.50	75.00	1.25	-
Unitary c	91.00	98.00	0.50	_	Milk Food 280.00	200.00	207.50	12.50	-
Ulloride I. 1. 8 2840.00	2420.00	2675.0	215.00	+	Motor Industries1200.00	785.00	840.00		
	82.50	85.50	nil		Mukand Ltd 157.00	127.00	132.50	1.50	
140am: 196.75	176.25	180.00	3.75	-	National Organic 1660.00	1185.00	1200.00	60.00	-
	87.50	96.00	1.00	+	Nirlon 22.00	14.00	16.50	2.50	+
	45.50	47.00	1.50	-	Orkay Silk Mills20.50	15.00	15.50	0.25	
	53.50	53.50	5.50	_	Peico Electronics32.50	24.00	25.75	0.25	
EL Hotels 75.50 Brorts 65.25	58.00	61.00	1.00	-	Pfizer113.75	77.50	77.50	9.00	
bsorts 65.25 lindex Cables 88.00 lod Specialities 282.50 Garware No. 123.00	77.75	83.00	3.00	+	Ponds230.00	185.00	193.75	3.25	
Gin Pecialities	215.00	215.00	17.50	-	Premier Auto 74.50	56.00	57.00	6.25	-
Gr C Nylon	101.75	107.00	3.50	+	Raymond76.00	70.00	75.00	nil	
Cer pping 03.00	49.00	50.00	3.00	-	Reliance Industries 90.00	51.50	52.00	3.50	
Gad	44.00	45.50	1.00	+	Siemens India120.00	96.00	103.00	1.00	
Km2 4114	155.00	176.25	8.75	+	Shaw Wallace92.00	70.00	71.00	4.00	
mind committee	106.00	108.25	0.25	-	Shriram Fibres71.00	51.25	56.00	2.00	
(%)	215 On	218.75	1.25	+	SKF Bearings 1570.00	1240.00	1290.00	10.00	+
Hindusty India 1660.00	1050.00	1060.00	80.00	-	SPIC62.00	50.75	53.50	nii	
129.00 1	133.75	150.00	9.50	+	Tata Steel119.75	103.25	108.25		
411-1 Moto 117.50	101 00	107.50	2.00		Telco130.00	110.00	115.50	0.50	-
India Ltd	21.80	21.90	1.80	-	Vam Organic167.50	132.50	137.50		
	36.00	37.75	1.75	-	Videocon Int192.50	115.00	115.00		
Rayon 58.75	47.00	50.00	2.00	-	Voltas785.00			12.50	+
108.00	84 00	90 00	0.00	SAC.		17 50		2 50	-

CURRENCY	LIMIT		
	JINIT	TT Selling Rates Rs	TT Buying Rates Rs
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			141.0154
			45.0367
			53.1011
			14.3154
			2.5952
			6.7699
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			2.1754
			0.9424
			25.2559
			1.3497
			11.2740
			0.7813
			57.3098
Dollar	1	6.3395	6.2726
Rupee	1	1.1369	1.1216
Rupee	1	0.5992	0.5910
Guilder	1	8.9390	8.8433
Rupee	1	0.8175	0.7724
Dollar	1	9.1657	9.0674
Peseta	1	0.1493	0.1475
Rupee	1	0.7458	0.7356
Kroner	1	2.7892	2.7598
Franc	1	11.4335	11.3094
Shilling	1	0.1010	0.0944
Baht	100	67.3231	65.3552
Pound	1	28.1611	27.9564
Dollar	1.	17.1674	16.9924
Dirham	1.	4.676	4.6250
Rouble	1.	27.6670	27.3629
	Shilling Dinar Taka Dollar Kroner Pound Franc Dollar Rupiah Rial Lira Yen Shilling Dinar Dollar Rupee Guider Rupee Guider Rupee Kroner Franc Shilling Baht Pound Dollar Round	Shilling 100	Dollar

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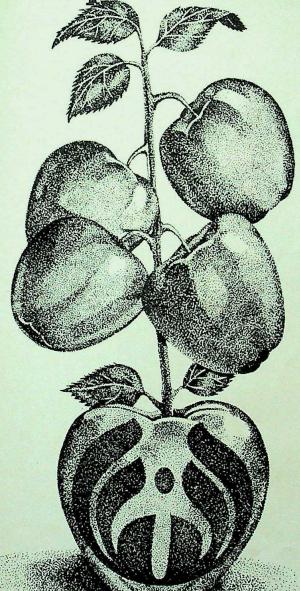
Bombay Tel: 4370982, 4370983, 4379476. Ahmedabad Tel: 408779, 462005. Pune. Madras Tel: 619383, 619360.

Bangalore Tel: 643845. Secunderabad Tel: 847468, 847256. Calcutta Tel: 299529, 297952, 297633, 294953. Patna Tel: 31035.

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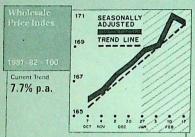
For further details contact the nearest IDBI office or write to Manager

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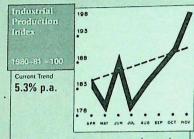
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First the good news—industry is growing fast this year, bringing to an end all the fears of a recession written about earlier in the press. And now the bad news: there is still no indication of inflation being under control. The spiralling prices need the urgent attention of the Government. Apprehensions of a tough budget resulted in shares dropping earlier, but intervention by institutions have artificially stabilised the downward trend.

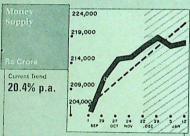
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



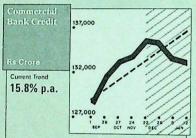
Wholesale prices continued to rise through the last fortnight. Inflation recorded a rate well into double digits.



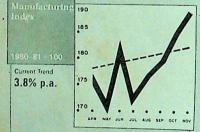
Industrial production registered a sharp increase for the fourth month in successionending fears of recession.



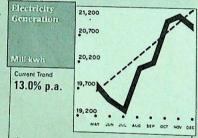
Money supply remained in check last fortnight-but the long-term rate remains dangerously above target.



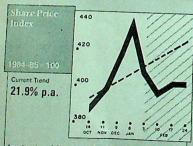
Credit conditions tightened further fortnight. Any more contractions and it may throttle industry.



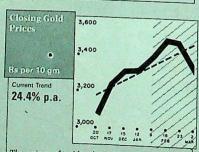
The manufacturing output recorded a sharp increase in the month of February-a welcome sign for the economy.



Electricity generation dipped last month. The Government needs to take action here to ease the bottlenecks for industry.



Institutional buying prevented the pre-budget blues from turning into a rout. Still investors preferred to wait and watch.



The prices of gold, which had shown a sharp spurt during the course of last month, registered a slight decline.

	Growth of items in the 1st fosterial	S
	Growth of items in the 1st fortnight of Pe	bruary 1900
		% Growth
	Onions	18 40
	Rape & Mustard Seeds	11 0
	Betel-Nuts Gingelly Seed	100
	Gingelly Seed	83.01
	Copra	1.12
	I Linsecu Oil	
	Groundnut Oil	··· 6.01
	Ball Bearing	
	Woollen Cloth & Woollen Khadi	4.94
	Gingelly Oil	4.81
	Sewing Machine.	4.37
	Tapioca	4.30
	Tende	3.95
	Trucks	3.60
	Linseed	3.48
	Pete Crude & Natural Gas	2.55
	Caxbles & Wires	
	Mustard Oil	2.47
	Bulk Drugs	2.40
	Arhar	2.25
	Cigarettes	1.92
Ī	Power-driven Pumps	1.74
	Biscuits	1.74
	Turmeric	
	Car	
	Handloom & Powerloom Products	
	Ghee	
	Machine Tools	1.24
	Fish	1.19
	Coffee	1.11
	Masoor	1.07
	Buses	0.99
	Cement	
8	Oranges	0.96
	Transformers	0.96
	Electricity	0.91
	Tubes	0.90
	Nitrogenous Fertilisers	0.90
3	Groundnut Seeds	0.89
ğ	Watches & Clocks	0.88
12		0.06

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Of the 134 series considered, 85 of them with a total weight of 49.646 had a positive growth and 49 of them with a total weight of 35.206 had a negative growth.

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Pesticides & Insecticides Groundnut Oilcake..... Aluminium.

Numbers, January Industrial Licences Issued 31 Numbers. January Thousand Tonnes. January

29.20 27.41 Revenue Earning Traffic Million Tonnes, January... ... 22542 19966 Rail Movement

Net Tonnes Km, January

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57



A product with superior staying power. Born out of the latest Japanese Tajima over 20 years... Bhor brings you... Bhor Marblex Super. technology.

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% Growth 16.40

> 7.25 6.57 6.01 4.94 .4.37 .4.30 .3.95 .3.60 2.55 2.53

> 2.40 2.26 1.92

1.62 1.62 1.36

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hem with a growth and 5.206 had a

RS 1989 990

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19966 OLICY GROUP Making it the most durable tile you have

ingrained capacity to take on a lot more

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Cut it out for your floor. Bhor Marblex Super. ever set foot upon.

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you've designed. Without compromising on good looks.

Bhor Marblex Super.

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hospitals, jeuvellery shops, computer rooms, auditoriums, etc.

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mon of preservation of the endangered species.

("We mean the floor tiles")

A Gentle Reminder to all those who think India isn't ready for CAD/CAM yet

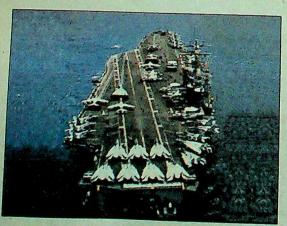
India ranks 11th in the list of Industrial nations with a huge infrastructure. One that produces some of the most sophisticated products in the world.

For Indian manufacturers to be competitive in domestic and International markets, to increase efficiency, quality and productivity, CAD/CAM systems are no more a luxury but a necessity.

India having recognised this, is fast turning into one of the World's biggest markets for sophisticated CAD/CAM systems. They now represent the fastest growing segment of the computer industry in India projected at Rs. 9000 crores for the 8th Five Year Plan.

Just what does CAD/CAM do

CAD/CAM is a remarkably versatile tool for innumerable applications. Very simply, it lets you optimally design, develop and manufacture





both simple and the most complex products in a cost effective manner. With your CAD/CAM system, you can have solutions to any design problem, you can make prototypes, check them out for strength and stability—in short, you design and manufacture the product on your screen itself!

CAD/CAM Systems find applications in designing products, factories, buildings, bridges, water supply systems, electricity distribution, telephone networks, mapping, cartography and of course in defence and space.

Enter Intergraph

A Fortune 500 company, Intergraph, is the world's fastest growing vendor of workstations. With an annual turnover touching Rs. 2000 crores. The world's largest company dedicated to developing and manufacturing computer graphics systems, it offers the widest

range of application industry streamer.

CAD/C

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range of CAD/CAM solutions. In most applications, Intergraph does not merely set the industry standard; it is the undisputed world leader.

CAD/CAM, Rolta and India

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Intergraph systems are already being marketed and supported in India, by Rolta. They are being used for diverse hi-tech applications. By organisations like Survey of India, Department of Space, Engineers India, to name a few.

And Rolta who support Intergraph systems have emerged as the leading Company in India to offer true "Total Solutions" to its customers.

Made possible by massive investments of Rs. 25 crores in infrastructure, along with a highly skilled manpower bank of over 300 people committed to the customers.

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Rolta collaborates with the world leader, Intergraph, to manufacture the world's most sophisticated CAD/CAM systems. For every conceivable application.

specialised hi-tech field, Rolta is ready to go one step further. Into manufacture.

Made in India

The Indian users will now have easy access to the world's largest set of CAD/CAM Solutions in Rupees. Rolta is now manufacturing CAD/CAM Systems indigenously based on the "Latest" technology from Intergraph.

What's really relevant is that the technology being transferred is the "Latest" Intergraph is not dumping 'obsolete' technology. And as a result of the ongoing arrangement Rolta will have continued access to the latest developments, innovations and updates.

To ensure that the Systems conform to the highest industry standards, Rolta is investing Rs. 21.5 crores to set up one of the most sophisticated computer manufacturing facilities in the country.

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DOCUMENTA

Short filr

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DOCUMENTARY FILMS Gaining Acceptance

Short films come into their own with Bombay festival

THE scene is repeated daily in cinema theatres around the country: as soon as the logo and signature une of the Films Division documentary omes on, the audience darts for the pocorn counter. Ironically, last fortnight the very same Films Division was be driving force behind India's first international documentary and short im festival in Bombay.

For years, short films and documenpries have remained in the shadow of the more glamorous feature films at international cinema jamborees in Inba. But not any more. They have finally come into their own.

The response to the first Bombay International Film Festival for Documentary and Short Films (BIFFDSF), which will now become an annual ment, was overwhelming. As many as 630 films from 48 countries were streened—110 being in the competitive section. "Until four days before the festialwe had received just seven hours of Ems. Then, suddenly we were deluged with entries," said Vijay Chandra, MFFDSF director.

Thefestival opened with Mani Kaul's sidheshwari, a highly stylised, 90minute Films Division production on the minent classical vocalist. But from the as well as hom the choice of award-winners, it was dear that it was a festivalfor activist In makers. Two main awards were bagged by socially committed films.

Among the award-winners the most popular film was Voices from Baliapal, decled by Vasudha Joshi and Ranjan Palit. Winner of a national award, it the Golden Conch and a Rs-2.5 th cash award for the best short documentary. Self-financed and shot in bout five days, Baliapal is an almost rotest against the previous overnment's attempts to grab farmand orissa for a missile testing range. he40-minute film begins with a chant Fishermen to Shiva: "Lord, why don't log listen to us? Sitting in your temple think you're so strong. You have

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However, the Baliapal farmers' strugge goes on with the new Government yet relocate the missile range. Joshi and grabbed the opportunity at the apconditions to make another appeal: "The conch is the Baliapal movement's symbol. So we hope this Golden Conch will persuade the new Government to review the missile project.'

The second Golden Conch, for the best long documentary, went to

Iosef Pasternak's Black Square—a thoughtful report on the struggle by Soviet artists against the official suppression of the art movement.

The third Golden Conch for the best fiction/animated film went to the Czechoslovakian Udel (A Lot). A more social than political satire, the

Still from Baliapal; (below) Vasudha Joshi and Ranjan Palit receiving the award

cate of Merit. In Memory Patwardhanthe maker of Bombay Our City, recently shown on Doordarshan after a long court battle-portrays the struggle between communists and terrorists in Punjab. Jennings' Last House is a more contemplative film on a family of bootleggers living in Bombay, while Shashi Anand's film is a racy report on India's child labourers.

The success of this year's festival will certainly give a boost to the short film movement in India as the festival Director Chandra fervently hopes. With the

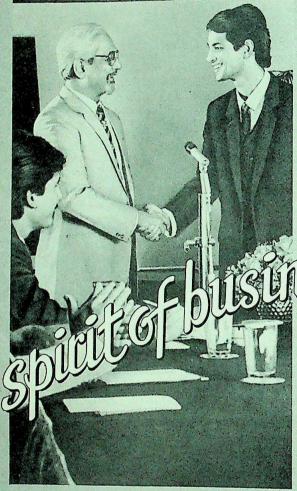




12-minute film is about a contemporary Sisyphus groaning under every day responsibilities.

The other Indian award winners were Anand Patwardhan's In Memory of Friends-which shared a Silver Conch with Luke Jennings' The Last House in Bombay-and Shashi Anand's Tomorrow is too Late which received a Certifilarge number of films, as well as the cash prizes, film makers will be looking ahead to the next short film festival. But next year, the organisers will have to pay more attention to the public screenings. which were poorly planned. For without an audience, even the most committed short film makers will fail to launch a movement. -M. RAHMAN

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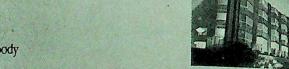
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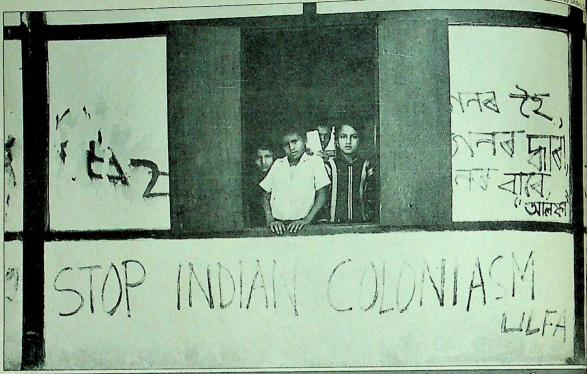
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ULFA wall graffiti in Nalbari district; and (below left) its rising sun symbol: dangerous growth



ULFA Dawn of a Dangerous Era

The extremist guerrilla organisation is running a parallel government in Assam with ominous implications

XACTLY a decade ago, a handful of Assamese youth rebelled against the democratic nature of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU)-led anti-foreigners movement and formed an organisation styled the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA). AASU and its political progeny, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), signed an accord with the Centre and captured power through the ballot. The 'rebels', who sought to achieve the same goal through bullets, disappeared into the jungles. The AGP, euphoric about its electoral victory, forgot about them as did the rest of the country.

But by last fortnight, ULFA's dangerously spreading influence in Assam threatened to go careering out of control and raise yet another Frankenstein at a time when the state—and the countryneed it the least. Over the last two years, ULFA, the revolutionary underground organisation seeking to establish a "sovereign, socialist Assam" through an armed struggle, has been virtually running a parallel government in a style that is crudely overt and ominous in its implication.

Hordes of men, women and students have been flocking to the underground organisation and the word ULFA and its symbol, a scarlet rising sun, are plastered all across the state: on walls, on tree-tops, on buses and, as a student at Rangia putit, on the Assamese mind.

Emboldened by the growing popular support, ULFA's activities have become increasingly overt. On October 29 last year, Rajen Sharma, the Nalbari district leader of ULFA, was lynched after killing a

businessman who had refused to page organisation the money it had deman ULFA openly held a condolence meeting Bahjani village where the district " mander-in-chief' Shankar Bhattad jee, unfurled ULFA's red-and-green and fired a light machine-gun in the The police looked the other way.

Two months later, some Guita based journalists were picked up by volunteers and taken to a rendent close to the state capital. There, the tral publicity cell convener of the guest group. Sidhartha Phukan, 35, 500 length about the organisation's ideal strength and designs. Phukan showed the journalists a videotapet rigorous "military training" to recommend with the Burmese version of armed with the Burmese and send man G-4 rifles, carbines and send man G-4 r

CC-0. In Public Domain. Gurukul Kangri Collection, Haridwar

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The organisation's clout-and lar support—has ad the state adminisin a fix. Says Sharma, a college Intat Nalbari: "More more villagers are ing to ULFA seeking issal of their pros and finally jointhem."

Taking advantage of support, the group taken over the role of Government-fightscial evils, enforcing bition and imposing aonthe wealthy. Even controversial are

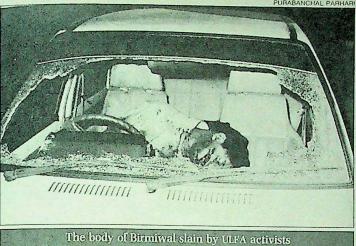
people's courts" where those acd of "social crimes" are tried and whed and, on occasion, executed.

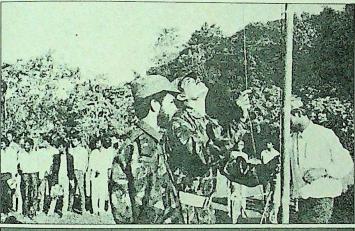
Alarge section of the population of the however, actually welcomes this opment, Tarun Sharja, 45, a village net, proudly says: "After all, they are constructing roads in the villages, ng people to set up schools and is and providing material aid to

his more publicised aspect of its des naturally serves to hide its more and unpalatable face. ULFA activave been accused of adopting crude The methods for eliminating those teluse to donate money or violate its ts. In fact, the people executed by Stigilante-type justice have become Assamese folklore. Examples:

Ran Sagar Tiwary, 50, a telephone Total Bijaynagar was found guilty Pagating the "flesh trade" and was

knaluddin Khan alias ''Pappu'' was Tezpur after he was found Tezpur after he was lower of extorting money in the name





ULFA leaders unfurl their flag at Bahjani condolence meeting

▶ Ratul Sharma, a young businessman in Dhemaji, was executed for outraging the modesty of a maidservant.

Such actions (officially 82 people have been killed by ULFA since 1984) have resulted in the organisation establishing a fear psychosis. The most shocking aspect of ULFA's strategy is the imposition of tax on the business community in Assam and the killing of those who dare to disobey the organisation. The result is that many wealthy businessmen are closing down their operations and fleeing from Assam to other states.

AYS Nem Chand Jain, a businessman whose brother Sampat was gunned down by the ULFA in Nalbari town last October: "We are living like prisoners. There is total panic among the business community who have no protection. Businessmen have already transferred nearly Rs 200 crore out of the state of Assam.'

Living in a fortified house guarded by securitymen from behind sandbags, Jain revealed that his father Mool Chand Jain received a copy of the ULFA letter on August 13, 1988, demanding Rs 20 lakh from businessmen Nalbari town. A few days later three ULFA activists showed up and demanded Rs 1 lakh from the Jains who refused. Then, on October 8 last year, three youth arrived on a motorcycle and started firing indiscriminately. Sampat Jain, along with two friends Satish Tamuly and Raj Kumar Sharma, was killed. ULFA claimed responsibility.

organisation's The spokesmen claim that they only collect funds from businessmen "indulging in corrupt practices". However, they also admit that its fund collection drive is to buy arms from foreign countries and train its cadre.

On January 20, the day Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal was in Guwahati. ULFA activists gunned down Shankar Birmiwal, president of the Kamrup Chamber of Commerce. The organisation had given a bandh call on that day to protest against ULFA's attack on the trad-

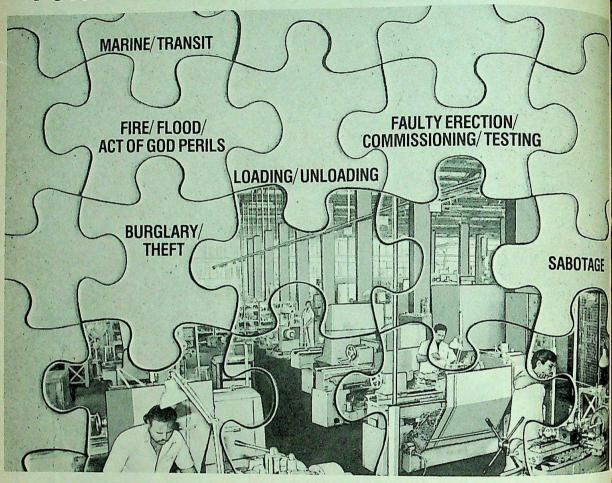
ing community in Assam.

Yet, ULFA's wider acceptance by the public makes it difficult for the police and administration to crack down on their activities. Specially since its strategy is liberally dosed with Assamese chauvinism. Says a police official: "ULFA's attempt to mix Marxist-Leninist ideology with Assamese chauvinism has made it quite different from other Naxalite groups which could not gain popular acceptance." Phukan, however, claims: "We believe in Marxism-Leninism and want the emancipation of all the communities living in Assam.'

But they also believe in the law of the gun. That is what makes their growing influence even more alarming. According to intelligence estimates, there are about 1,000 armed ULFA members operating in different parts of Assam. These highly trained members are placed under zonal and district commanders-in-chief and not only train others in the jungles in Assam but also carry out executions.

ULFA is divided into two separate entities, army and civil. The civil wing headed by Aurobindo Rajkhowa is re-

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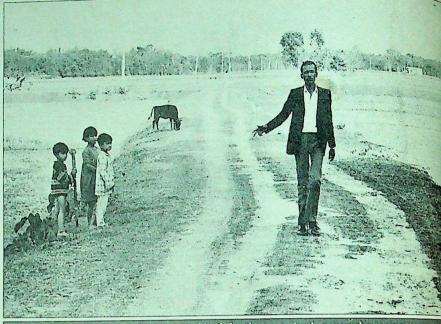
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sponsible for carrying on social reforms and constructive activity while the armed wing is responsible for fund collection for purchase of arms.

Even more alarming are ULFA's connections with China. It had originally approached China for political and arms aid in its bid to "liberate Assam from Indian colonialism". The Chinese Government preferred to wait and watch the organisation's ideological evolution and strengths before deciding its action. That decision has obviously been taken. For the last two years, the Chinese have been selling arms like M-16 and AK-47 assault rifles to them at rock-bottom prices.

Armed with sophisticated weapons and having established an ideological base among the masses, ULFA is now in a position to impose its military will on Assam. Ironically, a massive police crackdown against ULFA could also be the signal for the organisation to launch its threatened armed



ULFA supporters showing road built by the organisation: popular support

struggle. Warns Phukan: "We have not vet launched an armed revolution but only an armed propaganda." So far, the state Government has not been provoked into any police action. It has, therefore, decided to first opt for a political solution to the problem (see interview).

But that, in no measure, reduces the threat. Assam is currently under siegeby its own people. All it needs is one spark, one wrong move on the part of the a Daylite is Government, and Assam could become another Punjab or Kashmir.

-FARZAND AHMED in Guwahan

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THE underground "revolutionary" group, United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), appears to have virtually paralysed the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) Government. Home Minister Bhrigu Kumar Phukan spoke to Chief Correspondent FARZAND AHMED last fortnight. Excerpts:

Q. How serious are the problems created bu ULFA

A. The situation is serious and we are worried about it.

Q. As home minister. what steps do you think should be taken?

A. Some political steps have to be taken. Such a situation can't be tackled through administrative measures only. We discussed it at the Cabinet level and considered some measures to curb it. Ministers are applying their minds to it and I have forwarded my views in writing to the chief minister.



BHRIGU PHUKAN

We are worried"

Q. Who are the ULFA leaders? Has any effort been made to bring them to the negotiating table?

A. They are all Assamese youth with their bases in Burma. But they are underground. So we haven't been able to meet them. During the Assam movement, the then Congress(I) government brutalised them. So, they left the path of democratic movement and took up arms out of frustration. Now, we are trying to convince them that ours is a people's government and they should join the mainstream.

Q. Reports suggest that the AGP is also financing ULFA.

A. This is not true.

Q. Chief Minister Mahanta has publicly indicated that you have a hand in ULFA's activities.

A. This is a baseless allegation. If anybody proves it, I will resign. Il the chief minister has

proof, then why doesn't he take action against me? He should have dropped me from the Cabinet. Instead, I have been given the home portfolio.

Q. Is there any proposal to ban ULFA?

A. A ban in itself is not a solution We have to understand the problem and find a political solution to it.

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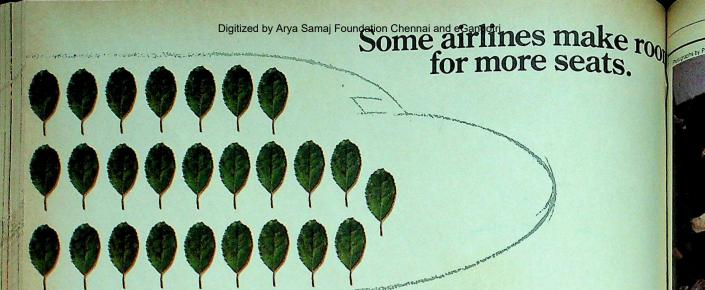
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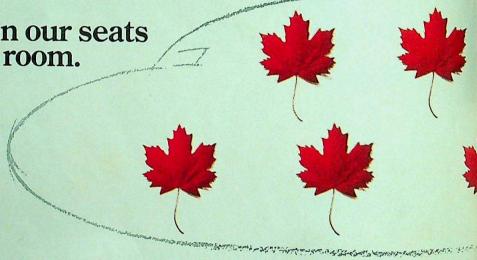


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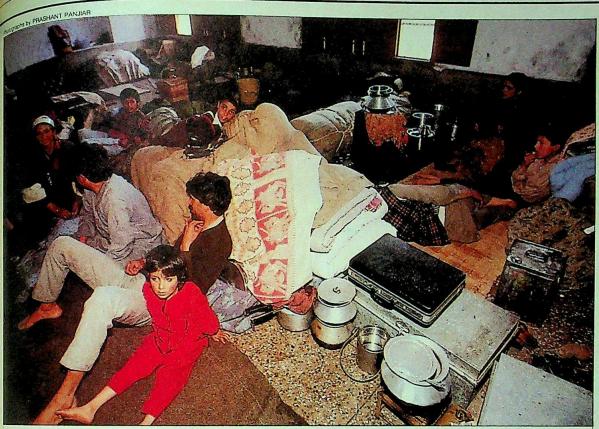
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Kashmir refugees huddle together in a Jammu camp: fear, anger and helplessness

KASHMIR REFUGEES

An Alarming Exodus

Kashmiri Hindus flee the valley creating a communal crisis

N 1947, when Pakistani raiders pillaged the homes of Kashmiri Hindus, Sohan Lal was a seven-year-old child hihe border district of Kupawara. He his father and eight relatives before teing to Srinagar. He returned home the two years. The neighbourhood ason, carpenter and shopkeeper—all helped him start afresh. He etame a teacher in the local school and id with his family in a house which, on the years, expanded to 15 rooms. Last fortnight, Sohan Lal fled Kupaagain. There was no raid on his ouse No killings. Not even a threat. But then after Shivratri, his relatives from hantnag and Srinagar did not visit him a hey had done every year, Sohan Lal ancked He locked up his house, gave Sekeys and his cattle to a Muslim friend addeparted with nine other families for Archete in Jammu. Says Sohan Lal: herewas no communal tension. It took days to leave everything because of

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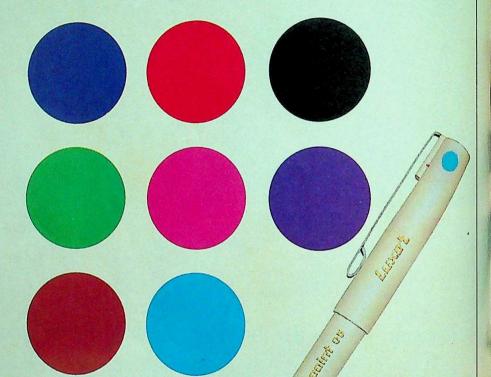
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Protest march by refugees in Jammu: nowhere to go

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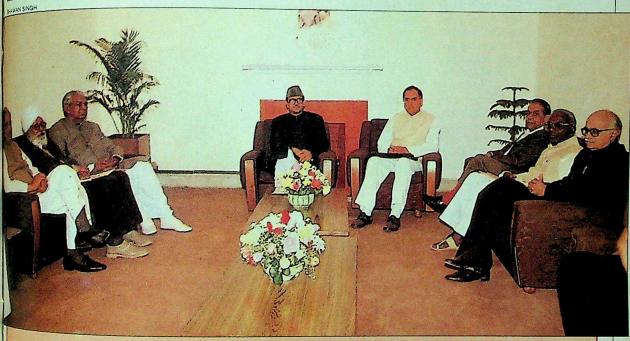
n'my Muslim friend.' On his third day in Jammu, Sohan was exposed to an alien phenome-He was part of a 10,000-strong procession led by VHP acting President, ishnu Hari Dalmia. As the protestors would their way through the streets of annu, the sloganeering became disinchy communal. "Security for Hindus nkashmir" and "Down with Pakistan" on gave way to "Har-har Mahadev" ad Bharatvarsh main rehna hoga, Vande Maram kehna hoga" (If you want to live ndia, you have to chant Vande Maiaram). If there were any doubts that is cadres had taken over the dem-

onstration, they were put to rest when a placard that read "Down with Indian secularism" was raised. Sohan Lal had never heard such a communal outburst.

UT Sohan Lal was just one among over 10,000 Hindu families which have left the valley—and whose insecurities organisations like the RSS and VHP are trying to exploit. And should they fall into the net of communal propaganda, they can reverse the political efforts (see box) for normalising the Kashmir crisis. Says Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed: "We can't afford more complications." Adds an IAS officer in Jammu: "Our hands are full

with the migrants. The last thing we want is a communal flare-up.'

In fact, by the time the all party delegation reached Srinagar, about 40,000 people had reached Jammu, 2,500 Udhampur, 600 Kathua and about 2,000 Haridwar and Delhi. In each of the dozen filthy camps in Jammu and in the decrepit Kashmir Bhawan in Delhi, most refugees said that though they were initially reassured by Jagmohan's installation as governor, the militancy was unstoppable. Said a doctor from Srinagar: "How can we raise slogans for Islamic rule or say Pakistan zindabad?" Understandably, the militant's movement has isolated the



THERE was an element of tragic farce in the all-party meeting convened by the National Front Government last fortnight to find a solution to the ballooning crisis in Kashmir. Present at the confabulations were Farooq Abdullah and Rajiv Gandhi, the two men widely perceived as being indirectly responsible for the current mess.

The farce went even further as the team, at Rajiv's instigation, flew into Sinagar the next day (except Abdulah) Ostensibly to obtain a first-hand assessment of the seriousness of the Shation. The members, representing a cross-section of Indian political ideology, spent the next 24 hours in the Curiew-bound city holed up in the lish Centaur Hotel overlooking Dal ake. The highlight of their visit was the sharp exchange between Rajiv

IN.

ALL PARTY MEET

Hype and Hope

and Governor Jagmohan and an even sharper exchange between Rajiv and BIP leader Jaswant Singh.

That the occasion, seen as a major initiative initially, had been reduced to a game of political brinkmanship was sadly obvious. But even so, it was not entirely without success. The major breakthrough was the consensus among all the representatives on the tricky issue of opening a dialogue with the militants. Said Saifuddin Choudhury of CPI(M), a member of the delegation: "By going there and letting the people of Kashmir vent their anger it will help in beginning a dialogue." Still, he sensibly warns: "It is only the Party leaders meet at Delhi

beginning of a long process."

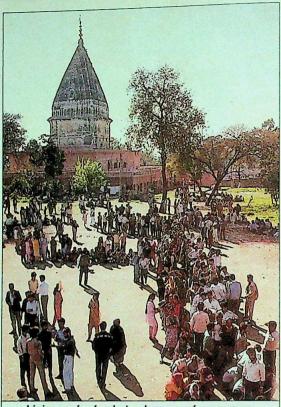
For the National Front Government, the all-party involvement was clearly inevitable-and it suits them well. Realising that the situation is fast getting out of hand, and with Jagmohan under siege, the strategy of evolving a consensus approach absolves them of individual blame if things get worse. But with Rajiv Gandhi who was more keen on scoring debating points-he even got into an argument with Jagmohan over the seating arrangement for Devi Lal whom he called "my deputy prime minister"—the prospect of the new initiative achieving anything worthwhile is as tenuous and fragile as the situation in the valley.

-PANKAJ PACHAURI

valley's 1.2 lakh Hindus.

The migrants' woes were doubled by the unpreparedness of the Jammu administration. The first trickle of refugees began in mid-January. They took shelter at Geeta Bhawan, a pilgrims' transit house. When the organisers of Geeta Bhawan heard about the refugees' plight, they announced in the press that all persons looking for safe sanctuary could come to them. This resulted in a flood of migration. Geeta Bhawan could not cope and the administration stepped in. Migrants were housed in government buildings and foodstuffs distributed. But with government housing also running out, the last batch of refugees was put up in a camp made up of 100 tents on the banks of the Tawi river in Nagrota, 12 km off Jammu. As most refugees belong to the middle class pandit community they are appalled at being forced to stay in tents.

Their reasons for abandoning their comfortable homes are easy to pinpoint. Most of the senior government officials



Lining up for food at a Jammu refugee camp

killed by the militants were a distant moved dits, who have traditional against no dominated the state's burn and against no cracy. Moreover, the move of the valley has acquired in the valley has acquired a blind ists singing verses from the valley has acquired a blind ists singing verses from the valley has acquired a blind ists singing verses from the valley has acquired a blind ists singing verses from the valley has acquired a blind ists singing verses from the valley has a cquired a blind ists singing verses from the valley has a cquired a blind in the valley has acquired a blind in the valley has a

Fleeing from the strain fore chequer hold of Muslim militants in a distributed of valley, many of the migra fast. He shoul have landed straight in thele is a Rs 2.5 crore. Hindu fundamentalists. The is a knee-jer groups choose to ignore the chan recently that many Muslims too have the posts of retthe valley because of crippiers and stated curfews and breakdown of the less tup in the administration. In Delhi its at government dislocated Muslims from them personers follow can be seen hawking becomes would famed Kashmiri shawls and a to regularly. B pets. But such facts do not in funded to lockin with the Hindu fundamentals that the horse perception of the Kashmir pulsay of the milliem. So at the refugee can be with the Hindu fundamentals that the horse perception of the Kashmir pulsay of the milliem. So at the refugee can be with the Hindu fundamentals that the horse perception of the Kashmir pulsay of the milliem. So at the refugee can be seen have the horse perception of the Kashmir pulsay of the milliem.

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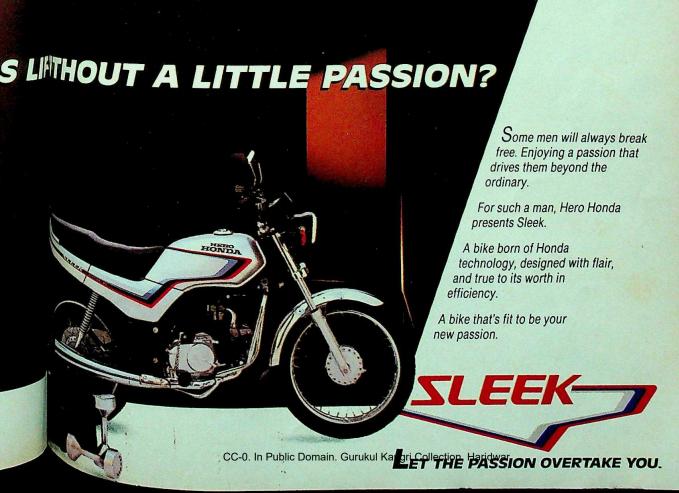
Jagmohan in Srinagar: under siege

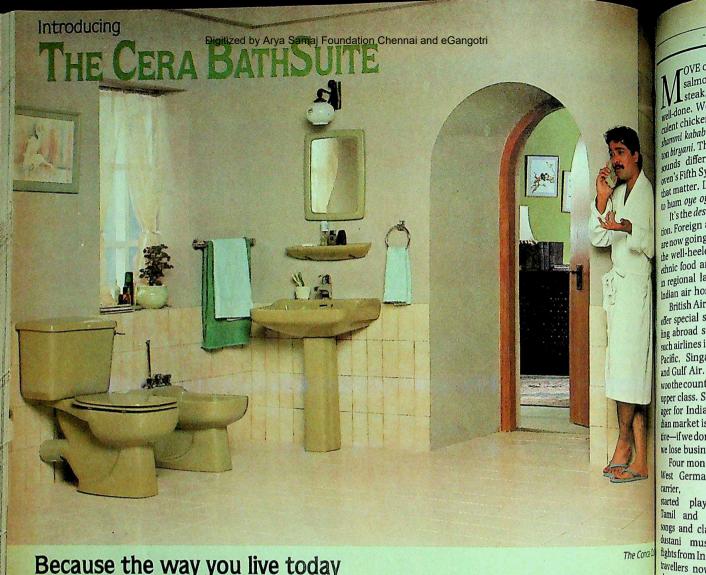
Liberation Front (JKLF), in particular, realises that an exodus on communal lines would eventually discredit their movement. In a written statement, four area commanders of JKLF recently of-fered to "retire" from the secessionist movement if it was proved by an independent agency or media that they killed anyone only because he was from a particular community"

An added twist to the problem is the hostility towards the migrants from some Jammu residents. Many Jammu Hindus harbour age-old prejudices against Kashmiri pandits who they believe corner all crucial government jobs and are more affluent.

With the fate of the migrants intertwined with the solution to the Kashmir problem, their ordeal threatens to be a long one. And if their plight is given a communal colour, it would have a disastrous impact. For a Hindu backlash will only strengthen the case of the Muslim fundamentalists in Kashmir.

> -PANKAI PACHAURI in Jammu with NISHA PURI





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OVE over smoked salmon and beef steak, rare or Welcome sucalent chicken tikkas and stammi kababs with muton biryani. The music too ounds different. Beeth-

oren's Fifth Symphony is old hat. Or, for bat matter, Louis Armstrong. It's time whum oye oye and ek do teen.

lt's the desi era in international aviaon. Foreign airlines operating in India are now going out of their way to attract the well-heeled Indian. Together with chnic food and music-cum-magazines n regional languages, handed out by Indian air hostesses.

British Airways was one of the first to ofer special services to Indians traveling abroad some five years ago. Now such airlines include Lufthansa, Cathay Pacific. Singapore Airlines, Emirates and Gulf Air. Others are gearing up to woothe country's increasingly itinerant upper class. Says British Airways Manager for India, Alan Burnett: "The Indan market is becoming more competitive-ifwedon't introduce new services. we lose business."

Four months ago, the West German national carrier, Lufthansa. sarted playing piped Tamil and Hindi film songs and classical Hindustani music on its lights from India. Besides, tavellers now have the thoice of consuming regetarian food. Cathay Pacific—the Hong Kongbased airline—has gone a step further: a vegetarian meal has replaced nonregetarian dishes as the standard fare.

The Congû

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INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES

An Indian Touch

Major airlines woo Indian passengers

Not to be left behind, Pan Am has introduced an all-Indian crew on its flight from Delhi to London via Frankfurt. The transformation is especially dramatic in the case of foreign airlines flying to the Middle East, Canada and UK-routes which are traditionally dominated by immigrants, labourers and first-time travellers. Gulf Air's Area Manager Said A. Zahor remarks: "Earlier only Air India attracted Indian travellers-now everyone is going ethnic.' Late last year, the airline started screening Hindi films.

British Airways, which initiated its Indian visitors service in 1985, today finds it tough to cope with as many as

1,100 requests every month from Indian travellers. Passengers disembarking at London are offered a range of services by the

airline: from mundane things like hiring cars and booking hotel rooms to buying West End theatre tickets.

All this makes good business sense for there are more Indians now

travelling abroad than ever before. Says Inder Sharma, chairman, Sita World Travel: "The market is growing at around 12 per cent a year, which is pretty high." Five years ago, the ethnic passenger traffic was growing at a mere 5 per cent annually.

Singapore Airlines is particularly keen on wooing first-time Indian travellers to Canada. Says Kok Choy-Tham, Singapore Airlines' manager, northern India: "Most of these passengers cannot speak English. They need special assistance." Since early last year, on its Vancouver flights, Indian passengers are being specially assisted in filling immigration forms, obtaining customs

Apart from local vegetarian food, Indian magazines and popular Hindi and Tamil music, foreign airlines even have Indian air hostesses on their flights.

(Clockwise from right) Indian dishes; British Airways brochure; and Pan Am's Indian air hostesses





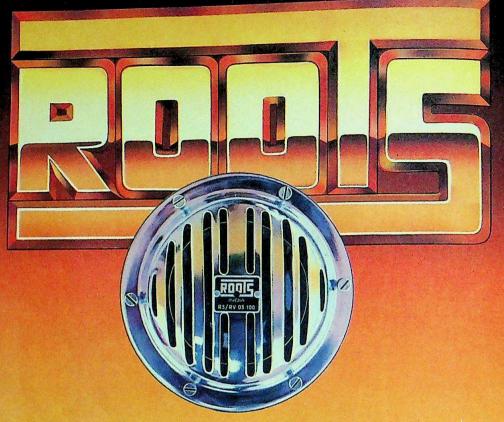
Exclusively yours from
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when travelling Concorde/Hardwar
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clearance and even provided Hindi menu cards.

Airlines like Lufthansa, on the other hand, are pitching for the sophisticated business traveller. W. Heesen, regional marketing manager, Lufthansa, says that the latest Indian journals are airlifted to Frankfurt for the benefit of passengers on flights to India.

Thus the pampering continues. And, ironically, even as Air India attempts to acquire a more westernised image, the international airlines are giving themselves an Indian touch. And taste.

-SURAJEET DAS GUPTA



NO. 1 IN HORNS

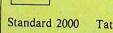
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HAT'S the connection between **V** satellites sugar? Right now, nothing at all. But a few years fom now, the answer to that question could be rastly different. For satelits could then be playing akey role in preventing a harp rise in sugar prices of the kind seen recently.

The principle is simple. Pictures taken by satellites are interpreted by computers to give estimates of sugarcane yields well before the crop is acwally harvested. And if a shortfall is predicted, the Government has ample ime to import sugar bebre a shortage occurs.

Dramatic as that sounds, it's not a farteched proposition for the

bundreds of scientists working in the kild of remote sensing, interpreting picwres beamed down by satellites. For them, estimating crop yield is just another of the uses to which satellites can be put. Satellite pictures are already beloing to draw an accurate map of the ountry's natural resources. They're beingused to monitor drought and floods, bkeep a track of erosion, salinity and waterlogging, to locate marine fishing gounds and to spot sources of ground Nater. Declares Space Commission Chairman U.R. Rao: "The accurate and reliable information on the changing trands in natural resources is the backbne of planning for development.'

The raw material for all this is the gnalsbeamed down by four satellitesbe American Lansat V and NOAA-11, the French SPOT and India's own IRShwhich pass over the country 10 to Rimesevery day. The signals they send te picked up by antennae at Shad-Lagar, near Hyderabad, where they are on tapes before being processed pictures. These are visually anabed by specialists. Alternatively, a inputer analyses the way in which surfaces reflect different Navelengths of sunlight to yield a map of Surface features.

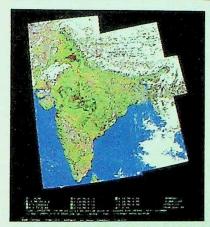
Involved in interpreting the pictures at as many as 64 agencies—among ten being the National Remote Sens-RASERCY (NRSA) in Hyderabad—and than 2,000 scientists. Twenty des have started their own remote Ohne application centres. (he figure is indicative of the grow-

REMOTE SENSING

Valuable Images

Satellite pictures provide agricultural data







Satellite pictures showing(from top) snow cover; salinity in Sangrur; and drought conditions in India

ing trend. In 1985, the NRSA sold about 7,200 satellite pictures. By 1989, the figure was 12,000. The buyers: agencies like the Geological Survey of India, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. and the Defence Research and Development Organisation. The growing popularity is not surprising considering some of the successes of remote sensing. For instance, it was satellite pictures which first revealed the shocking depletion of forest cover. While officials insisted that trees cover 23 per cent of the country, remote sensing put the figure at 14 per cent.

In Chandigarh, the Bhakra-Beas Management Board uses satellite

pictures to plan in advance how the scarce summer flow from the melting snows is to be distributed among power generation, irrigation and drinking water supply. Last year, the NRSA predicted the snow-melt runoff would drop to 14.25 lakh cusecs from 19.50 lakh cusecs. Says P. Subba Rao, a hydrologist at the NRSA: "At first, the board felt we had made a mistake. Later, they cabled a congratulatory message.'

Other sophisticated satellite studies are in the works. Project Vasundhara, a geological information system for mineral exploration, involves an integrated appraisal of data from satellite remote sensing, airborne geophysics and ground-based geological, geophysical and geochemical data.

The National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use has used satellite data to prepare maps on soil productivity and land capability. The National Wastelands Development Board has commissioned studies on the nature of wastelands in 146 districts. Other satellite applications are being planned: tracking the underground fires in the coalfields in Bihar and the pest attack on the apple crop in Himachal Pradesh.

Finally, to unify the different studies to yield a holistic picture of national resources, the Government has set up the National Natural Resources Management System. Says Dr D.P. Rao, chief of the NRSA's Application Group: "The reach and accuracy of satellite data will make many say we wanted this information yesterday." That's hardly an exaggeration. -AMARNATH K. MENON



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CRICKET

Mixed fo

7 HEN the '90s". By series only suc newquestions ng ones unan many of the cu not last out decade. The thr was lost 0-1 t man was infer which the Instrength of ch The hangone-day series one-run victo Richard Hadle ultimate ball defeats and an ^{out} of the fina Some of th by to opener oroidable. Otl a selectio

hg what the Bo a India perce elf-created. T hade the diffe hikkanth and mer captain ngh Bedi r

Arrive in better shape.





- Bedi and Kapil share a joke
- Raman in trouble at Christchurch
- View of the Auckland crowd

Short of Confidence

Mixed fortunes on tour

7 HEN the new-look Indian cricket team left for its New Zealand V tour, it was billed "the team of the '90s". By the end, however, the knies only succeeded in raising a host of Rewquestions while leaving many existbg ones unanswered. It is obvious that many of the current crop of players will and last out the year, let alone the drade. The three-match Test series which was lost 0-1 to a team which man for man was inferior, was a set-back from which the Indians did not have the strength of character to recover.

The hang-over lasted through the one-day series. There was an exciting ne-run victory at Wellington when hard Hadlee was bowled off the pentimate ball by Kapil Dev. But three stats and an inferior net rate put them ^{ut of the} finals.

Some of the problems—like the in-Ty to opener Navjot Sidhu—were unoddable. Others, stemming mainly on a selection policy bent on destroy-What the Board of Control for Cricket hdia perceived as unionism, were et created. The two omissions that ade the difference were those of K. The difference were those than the and Dilip Vengsarkar, both mer captains. Tour manager Bishen agh Bedi realised the folly early realised the lony care



Vengsarkar. But the way in which he was handled shattered the confidence of a batsman who has played over 100 Tests and scored over 6,000 runs.

Vengsarkar just could not get going. He made 47, his highest, in the third Test when India rattled up 482. In the first one-dayer India lost to Australia, he made the top score of 35, and in both these innings demonstrated that he had lost none of his striking ability. But he invariably found himself the centre of all selectorial discussions. When skipper Azharuddin wanted him to play, Bedi was opposed to it, and by the time Azharuddin came around, Bedi had changed his mind.

Bedi concentrated his energies on fielding practice, but this was the area in which the team was found wanting the most. Catches were dropped, running lethargic, it was the worst fielding performance in recent years.

"It is not fair to judge us on one

afternoon's performance," said Bedi. The afternoon in question was the one in Christchurch, where from the perch of 146 for three, India slid to 164 all out. The second Test at Napier was ruined by rain, while the third was drawn. The drawn Test saw Indian batting at its best, with Azharuddin playing easily his best innings, a superbly compiled 192. That knock captured the imagination of the crowds as did the team's behaviour.

Azharuddin led a very popular team, welcome everywhere, praised everywhere for gentlemanly behaviour. Bedi, a popular figure himself, had much to do with the image the Indians presented. The Chairman of the New Zealand Cricket Council, Barry Paterson, wasted no time in putting on record the council's appreciation.

It is difficult to disagree with Bedi's assessment that one afternoon's bad batting was an aberration. Just as it is easy to recognise the justice of his much-

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Gursharan





- Team celebrates Azharuddin's birthday
- Hadlee cuts in the Auckland Test
- Tendulkar (left), Vengsarkar and Manjrekar

quoted comment about throwing the ram into the Pacific Ocean after their one-day disasters.

The Test series gave India two playis for the future: medium pacer Atul Wasan and left arm spinner Venkatapathy Raju. The batsmen to do well, part from the skipper, were Manoj Probhakar, W.V. Raman, and Kiran More. What India could not have bargained for was the loss of Kapil Dev's bility to strike either with bat or ball.

There were inherent weaknesses in be team which it had to carry around le so many albatross. There was no ल्याबा pair of opening batsmen. Raman dwell enough to get a couple of half and Manoj Prabhakar came within five runs of making a Test hunted. But a makeshift pair is a makeshift Pir. however one tries to camouflage it with attractive statistics.

Playing Hadlee on reputation cost dia dear. This is where Srikkanth tould have been valuable. Either ladlee had to be hit off his length or his on spells had to be batted through by Payers willing to defend. Srikkanth was available for the first, and Sanjay langekar, best-equipped for the secad had a poor series. Sachin Tendulkar ane within 12 runs of becoming the Jungest Test centurion at 16 but his hethosity got the better of him. India's bridging problems are the opening it the fielding and lack of motivation. Our boys lack pride in themselves, and y lack the pride that playing for the only evokes," said Bedi in a damageg confession.

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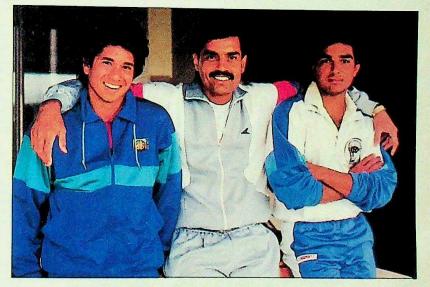
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90 range. A

s of the past

What is to be made about players like hek Razdan, a partial success in Pakito or Ajay Sharma, everybody's one-Gursharan at 27 too old? Is V.B.



Chandrasekhar a wicket-keeper or an opening batsman or a little of both depending on the state of Kiran More's finger? Is off spinner Venkatraman to be written off after just one bad performance in a side match in Hamilton?

OME of India's problems can also be traced to a mix-up in priorities. They played Test cricket as they would one-dayers. And in the onedayers, they tended to get bogged down once they had learnt the lesson of preserving their wickets in the early overs.

"I am always thinking about the future," said Bedi when asked about his plans for Indian cricket. Whether one agrees with his methods or not, one cannot doubt their sincerity. As for Azharuddin, he has clearly not let captaincy affect his batting. If anything, it has enriched it. The best thing the board can do is to ensure some continuity by keeping the manager and the captain on at least till the tour of England. India have had three captains in their last three series, and that is hardly the way to go about building a team.

What the team needs to regain most is confidence, as Australia have done. One of the highlights of the Australian recovery has been the retention of the same core of players. Youngsters have to be given time to mature. And if the veterans have to be weeded out, proper replacements have to be found first.

The easiest thing to do would be to make large-scale changes just for the sake of making changes. That would be fine in certain circumstances, but not if the intention is to build a team for the future. Obviously, it cannot be all youth or all experience. The two have to be blended. If India had to travel all the way to New Zealand to discover the truth of that cliche, it might still be worth the expense if they put it into practice.

-TONY SINGH in New Zealand

Go Newstracking in March



Indian Airlines: Airbus A- 320 nosedives into controversy



Jagmohan: Great Expectations



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Assembly elections:
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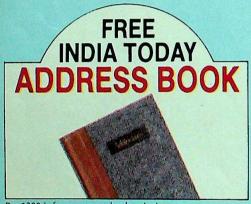


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Exorcism is making r OR two a

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SORCERY

Diabolic Exploitation

Exorcism is a major moneymaking racket in Kerala

10R two and a half years, Salal-uddin, a small smuggler in Varkala, rivandrum district, had been haassed by what he believed was a polagelst. Stones rained on his roof, whes disappeared, matresses and saas caught fire and goats with their raks slit were found in his backyard. Norse, his niece, Celina, 16, would often pinto a trance and say she saw appariions of a poltergeist.

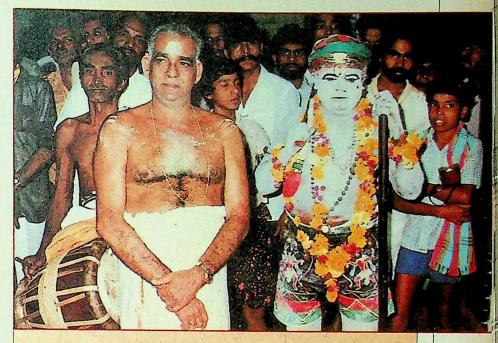
By September last year, Salaluddin adhisbrother Lahaq, had visited several merers who prescribed expensive ritus(costing over Rs 20,000). Finally, one Mul Hakim, convinced them that the whereeist was present in Salaluddin's 10-month-old son, Shihaz. So when one in Shihaz was missing, the family dimed the poltergeist had taken him.

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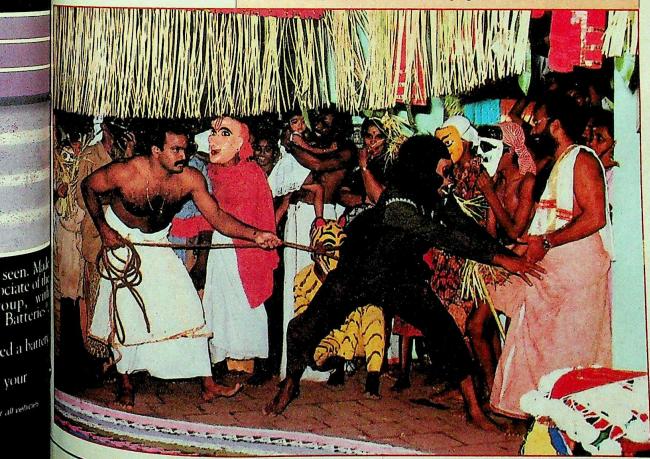
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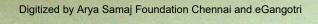
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hough they practise and promote the most primitive of faiths, many sorcerers in the state enjoy every comfort of the modern age.

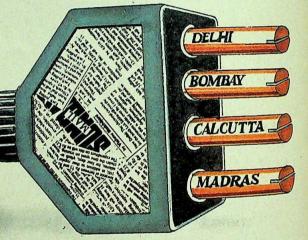
Shanmugan (above); and ritual in progress at a chathan madom





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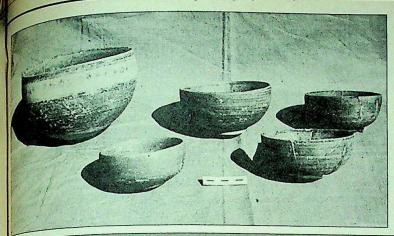
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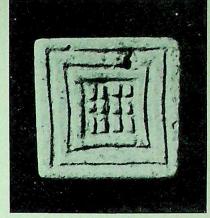
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Superior quality pottery; and (right) seal with rectangular figures inscribed; rare find

Tthe end of the first phase of excava-I tions in 1988, the scovery of a Harappan ste at Kuntasi, a tiny lamlet in Rajkot district, semed just an exciting rchaeological find. How-

ner, subsequent excavations have rerealed it to be a gold-mine, containing sch rich remains of the Harappan inlisation as are matched only by those fund at Lothal—a beautiful port comis that was unearthed in Gujarat in

for archaeologists from Gujarat's ale Archaeology Department and Decan College, Pune, who concluded their hidphase of excavations last fortnight, beexperience has certainly proved to be rewarding one. Says Dr M.K. havlikar, an expert from Deccan Col-Kuntasi should rank as one of the and important Harappan discoveries."

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Unearthing History

Finds throw new light on Harappan period

Adds Yunus Chitalwala of the state Archaeology Department: "The most interesting thing about Kuntasi is that it has thrown light on some new facets of the era which other Harappan sites haven't.'

The first is the indication of a communal way of living. A major find at Kuntasi-a port-cum-industrial complex during the Harappan period—are the living quarters for craftsmen producing beads, pottery, copper items like rings, bangles, knives and arrowheads. What makes the quarters really unique is the fact that most of the 50-odd rooms are inter-connected, and also that there is only one hearth.

Another important discovery is a seal made of fience (a primitive glass made of cobalt and silica), inscribed with rectangular figures, which has so far only been found in

Harappa. In fact, most of the seals at other Harappan sites bear bull and unicorn figures and are made of steatite. According to Dhavlikar, the seals could have been a sign of authority of the person in command of the settlement.

But interestingly, a structure of semi-moon shape in the middle of the living quarters has posed a riddle for the experts. Not seen in other Harappan sites, the structure is, in fact, similar to Chandrashila, which is normally found in Buddhist and Hindu places of worship. The earliest Chandrashila dates back to the 1st century B.C. which was discovered in a Buddhist stupa in Amra-

> vati. Chitalwala opines that the Chandrashila-shaped structure probably had something to do with the Harappans' way of worship. And to some extent, the hypothesis is substantiated by the discovery of a large semicircular platform—the likely seat of a religious head-near the Chandrashila.

But probably the most fascinating find is an unusual copper ring bearing two spirals that could be a pointer to interaction between the Harappans and the Cretans. The spiral motif was considered sacred by the Cretan civilisation, which flourished near Greece around the same time as the Indus Valley civilisation.

Moreover, unlike other sites, the settlement has double forti-

The excavated site at Kuntasi: well-preserved



fications. The reason for this, Dhavlikar believes, is that the Harappans came to Kuntasi to exploit its natural resources like carnelia, agate, shells and ivory, and built two fort walls to guard themselves from the hostile local people and animals.

Chitalwala, however, disagrees. He is of the view that the site was inhabited in two phases (1900 B.c. to 1700 B.c. and around 2200 B.c.) and hence the double fortification. The archaeologists have also found a gateway to the fortification and a long underground passage leading to the quarters.

A rich collection of superbly finished pottery made of high quality clay has also been unearthed at the site. The same clay is, incidentally, used in Morvi, a major tile producing centre 30 km away from Kuntasi. One structure at the Kuntasi site has yielded tools like arrowheads and knives made of animal bones, and in another the experts have found a heap of dry fish. Four chert weights, square and small in size, have also been discovered at the site. Besides, coarse millet (ragi) found during the excavations indicates that it was their staple food. In many Harappan sites wheat and barley have also been unearthed.

The site has also proved to be the best testimony to the building skills of the Harappans. The orientation of the walls. about 60 cm wide, is perfect. The size of the rooms is about 15 ft by 15 ft. A large portion in the middle of the structure is vacant. There is also a well on the eastern side and a silo, with a diameter of 1.5 m nearby, which forms a beautiful

Kuntasi, in fact, has little in common with other Harappan sites in Gujarat like Rozdi, Rangpur and Desalpur. Apart from its being a port, its specific type of infrastructure based on maritime trade and industry puts it in a different class. Again, unlike most sites which are falling apart due to the vagaries of nature. Kuntasi is well preserved. And the state Archaeology Department is making sparse use of cement to keep the stone structure intact.

Till last fortnight, the archaeologists had excavated about 60 per cent of the site-about 1 sq hectare of the total area of 1.5 sq hectare-spending about Rs 3 lakh in the process. To excavate the whole site will take up to three years. Only then, will a complete picture of the fortifications and the open yard in the centre of the mound emerge. As will, doubtless, numerous other exciting findings.

-UDAY MAHURKAR

ANDHRA PRADESH

Fossil Find

Full dinosaur fossil discovered

OR more than 50 years, the Godavari-Pranahita valley in central India has been a rich hunting ground for scientists, yielding fossils by the dozen. So it's not often that palaeontologists operating there get excited. Last month, however, as scientists revealed the fossil of a dinosaur discovered last

year, it was clear they were on to

something rare.

Fossils of the rhynchosaur, a dinosaur that lived around 200 million years ago, have been discovered in the region earlier. What is special about this one is that it is a complete skeleton, which enables palaeontologists to draw a fuller picture of the dinosaur. Also, until now, rhynchosaur fossils had been found in the Gadchiroli and Chandrapur districts of Maharashtra, and the Adilabad district of Andhra Pradesh. This one in Karimnagar was the first to be discovered on the southern bank of the Godavari.

Removing the fossil was an involved operation. The first Geological Survey of India (GSI) team comprising Dr C. Rao.

palaeontology division of the southern headquarters in Hyderabal says excitedly: "This is a lively fossi." certainly seems to have a lot to te scientists. The twisted vertebral column of the rhynchosaur fossil, for instance suggests a sudden, violent death, ah pothesis that's strengthened by the clenched grip of the left claw and the inverted phalanges of the right limb

Palaeontologists believe that when fully grown, the rhynchosaur was about the size of an Alsatian dog, though could grow to the size of the cow. Ithada conspicuous edentulous beak and a



unusually broad skull with the width greater than the length. The limb were not positioned directly under the body. The knees and the elbons were well away from the sides, which hints at a

primitive sprawling posture. Opinion about the rhynchosaur's eating habits divided. Some say it was a herbivore Others believe it subsisted on mussels

So far, rhynchosaur fossils have been found on all continents except Australia and Antarctica. However, the finds have not yielded any clues about the dino saur's place in the evolutionary ladder. Nor about how they suddenly became

The Karimnagar discovery ought provide fresh impetus to Indian scientification tists as they try and flesh out the skeleto —AMARNATH K. MENON of pre-history.

MCB SHOWN ARI



Rhynchosaur's fossil at site; (inset) artist's representation: important discovery

G. Vijayasarathi and Dr T.T. Nath, chanced to glimpse the top of the dinosaur's skull. Says Vijayasarathi: "We wanted to recover the fossil without allowing it to break up. Getting it out in one piece was a tricky procedure."

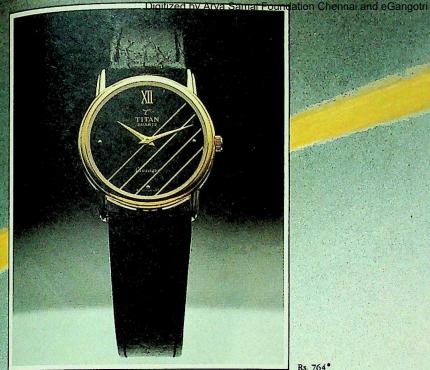
First, a block of earth—three metres long and 1.25 metres wide—was carved around the fossil. Then, it was sprayed with chemicals to protect the fossil, covered in newspaper sheets and finally with a plaster cast. The whole cast was then lifted and moved to the GSI laboratory in Hyderabad for cleaning and examination.

D.C. Das Sarma, director of the

of the Wi 1 Hyderabad vely fossil." a lot to tel ebral column for instance t death, a hi ened by the claw and the right limb. ve that when aur was about og, though t e cow. It hada beak and an

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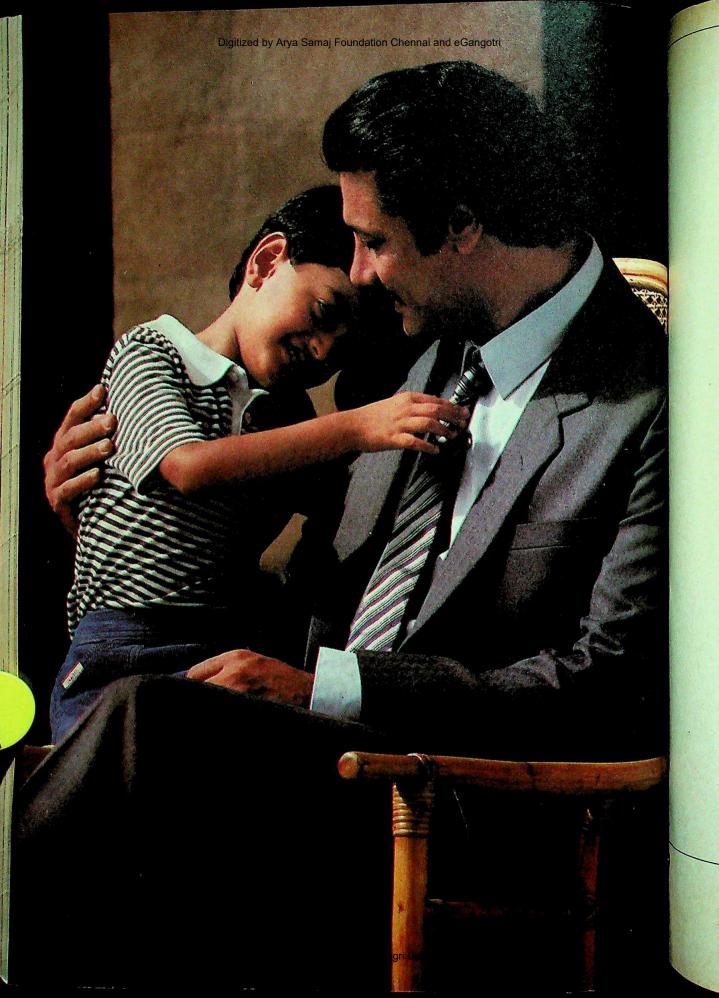


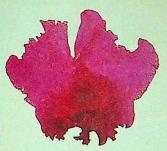


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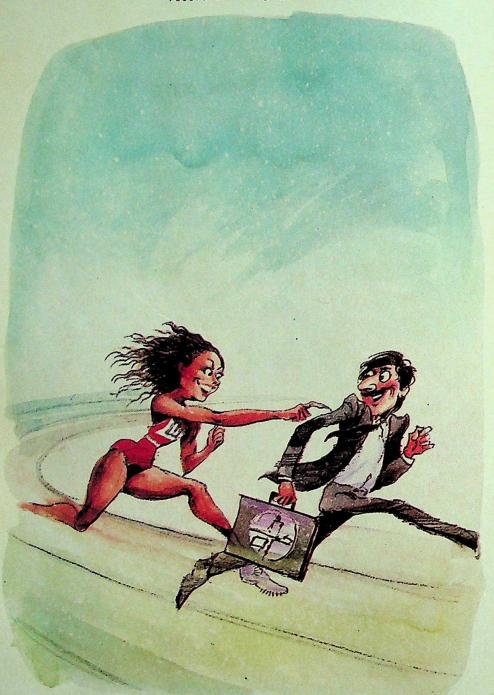
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A Shameful Episode

TWO new words have been added to the lexicon of the journalists' trade in India: Chautala and Meham.

What happened in the Meham by-election tooled by the Haryana Chief Minis-Om Prakash Chautala, the worthy Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal, some of the most bizarre episodes in is political history. It was a cross aren a horror movie and burlesque are, and the contest at one point

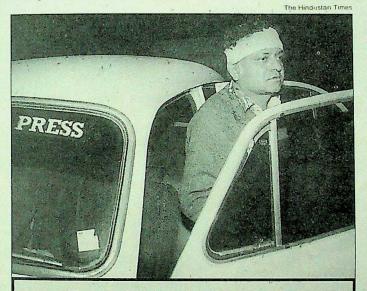
ame one between the gad guardians of law representatives of the If the latter were not en to pulp, it was not want of trying.

And what was the reon of the great chamosofthe freedom of the ss in the Janata Dal? nce. Chautala had afighting for his politi-Meat Meham because adversary, Anand h Dangi, had gathformidable support. the chief minister's e plan was to use midation and to tilt the come in his favour ugh a series of boothining exploits. Those stood in Chautala's were Dangi's defiant porters and members he press and indepentelectronic media.

But Devi Lal stoutly ended his son, with the It that a state crisis in th several villagers tkilled, ballooned into

teal to the minority Government at Centre, Prime Minister V.P. Singh, shrewd politician he is, distanced of from Devi Lal by resigning the a Dal presidency. He and his colwent into huddles for several to emerge with a face-saving fordatepoll in the entire constituency. doublespeak that put anything the Indira and Rajiv reigns in the The Janata Dal spokesman, Jaipal 'said: "We deem it (the formula) a political illustration of the Bal's soaring political idealism." hplicit message in his remark was that the esoteric subject of the freedom of the press could wait. The fledgling National Front had survived a major crisis. thanks to the Janata Dal's "soaring political idealism".

Let us examine the Janata Dal's idealism as it was displayed in Meham through one of the victims of police batons-Sunday Mail's Raghunath Rau. After his brush with death Rau wrote: "The photographers clicked away, while Vitusha (of National Herald) and I took notes of the scene. We tried to talk to a couple of nearby policemen...After a



The injured Raghunath Rau: laudable effort

The scales have fallen from the eyes of the optimists in the press fraternity who believed that the new Government would respect a free press.

> few moments, we saw the policemen waving at us to go back...The four of us started walking back to our cars. But...we heard shouts of dhar lo, dhar lo (grab them, grab them)...(we) found the whole mob of policemen charging down on us with raised lathis. We ran for dear life...Now it was just myself and the policemen. One savage blow to the head with a steel-tipped lathi threw me down...More lathi blows were rained on me...He (the policeman who had first spoken to us) shouted at his colleagues to stop the beating... There was at least one human being in the mob."

The Newstrack team did not fare better. Rahul Srivastava received severe head injuries and was brought to Delhi in a serious condition. Other team members were also injured and lost their cameras and equipment at Meham. It was clear that in the tasks assigned to the police and Chautala's supporters, preventing the recording of their illegal deeds at all costs was a priority.

The anger of the villagers of Chautala over the deeds of the chief minister's men was palpable. So was the anger of the press. Chautala's chequered career,

including his arrest at the New Delhi airport in 1978 for attempting to sniuggle watches, was related with some relish and few newspapers could resist the pun 'Mayhem Meham". Members of the press fraternity demonstrated at Delhi's Haryana Bhawan, with Chautala emerging to demand complaints in writing. Condemnatory statements from press organisations followed.

As the Janata Dal picks up the pieces. Meham is a bench-mark in the National Front, Government's relations with the press. The scales have fallen from the eves of the incorrigible optimists in the press fraternity, those who believed against all evidence that the Janata Dal and the larger front represented a new breed of politicians who wanted and would respect a free press. To explain a self-

serving political compromise as "soaring idealism" is to twist the knife in the wound.

We are now sadder and wiser men. The lessons of Meham are plain. There are no short cuts to retaining a free press and independent electronic media. We must fight every inch of the way to retain and expand the freedoms we enjoy. Therefore, we must salute men like Raghunath Rau and Rahul Srivastava, men who have risked their lives to tell the tale and show the photographs that must make us Indians hang our heads in shame.

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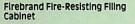
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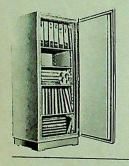
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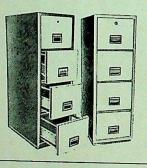
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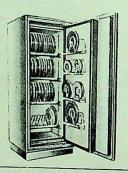


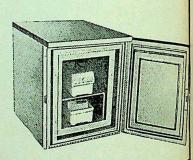
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Memorable Memoirs



BEFORE I say something about P.N. Haksar's autobiography, I wish to relate an incident which shows that in Haksar's company one is never

bored and invariably learns something.

Three years ago, I invited Anatoly Dobrynin, the longest serving Soviet ambassador to the US (24 years), to my house to meet Haksar. Dobrynin had accompanied Gorbachev to Delhi as one

of his top foreign policy advisers, second only to Eduard Sheverdnadze.

I had given Dobrynin a thumb-nail sketch of the phecalled nomenon Haksar-lawyer, diplomat, planner, guru, a Kashmiri pandit uneasy with brahminical mumbo-jumbo, principal adviser to Mrs Gandhi till 1973, social scientist, public speaker, scholar, author, wit, well versed in Marxist-Leninist thought, a moral fifth column and chief architect of our success in 1971, "During the Bangladesh crisis he had met your friend Henry Kissinger and got

the better of him," I added. Dobrynin was not unfamiliar with Haksar's name.

As Haksar walked up to greet my Soviet guest, Dobrynin's opening words were: "I am very glad to meet the man who outwitted Henry Kissinger." Haksar looked up and, in his most avuncular tone, said: "Am I expected to feel flattered?" That broke the ice.

Last week I read volume one of Haksar's autobiography. One more life: 1913-1929 published by Oxford University Press. Two other volumes are due and the end result will be called the Chetna (awakening) Trilogy. Haksar dictated the book because, as he explains, some years ago "my eyes, rather suddenly lost their central vision. I could no longer write. It took me some time to get used to the situation. If I succeeded in preparing a publishable manuscript, it is due to long, patient and meticulous work done by my friend, Bidyut Sarkar. Untiringly, he read out to me word-byword and sentence-by-sentence the entire script."

As Haksar is a master of the English language, his autobiography invites

comparison with the autobiographies of Jawaharlal Nehru and Nirad C. Chaudhuri. But mastery of language is not enough to produce a worthwhile book. Substance, subtlety, style, form and a capacity to convert the mundane into the memorable are also required to write a work that is remembered. Haksar has a brilliant, analytical and orderly intellect and writes with feeling and sincerity. All his life he has endeavoured

Hak ende wid cor thr life bri on ar

Haksar, who has endeavoured to widen his consciousness throughout his life, has a brilliant and orderly intellect, and writes with feeling and sincerity.

to widen his consciousness. But his introspection is not egomaniacal like Nirad Chaudhuri's or self-conscious like Nehru's. He writes: "The habit of falling into a state of introspection seemed, at times, to be divorced from myself that I tended to fall apart and at times, separate from myself the other state of my being. In such moments I have had to make great efforts to gather myself together. All this bothered me a great deal. I wanted to know how I came to be what I am. I must excavate the deepest recesses of my memories, explore the farthest cavities of my mind in order to understand the gradual, tough, painful crystallisation and widening of my consciousness."

Haksar makes rural and semi-rural India come alive in his inimitable style. His portrayal of his mother (whom he adored) and his father (whom he feared) form the central part of this volume which also happens to be dedicated to his parents.

His father was a judicial officer in the Central Province who was transferred from one obscure town to another and remained a somewhat distant and one nous presence for his wife and children. In this volume—that spans the first ly years of Haksar's life—the author is yat to come to terms with his father. That is not the case with his mother, who was lady of great tenderness, integrity and character.

Haksar's father was not the most considerate of husbands. He was, infat

one of those men who give precedence to their jobs over their families. The result was that Haksar's mother would often weep silently, Haksari candid about his mother's distress. "One of the questions I put to my mother which evoked the standard response, was about her coing. I have been prone to tean throughout my life. Inerpressible joy and sorrow tum into tears. Music evokes tears and so does the residue incommunicable loneliness Tears alone relieve that state. And if one can shed them in the presence of someone in whom one reposes confdence and from whom our has an assurance of love

tears make life less of a burden. I understand my tears, but the mystery of my mother's tears remained unresolved til almost the latter half of my life Haksar is in good company: both Churchill and Nehru too did not bother to his their tears when they were deeply moved.

Haksar's father thought poorly a schools and reluctantly agreed to send his eldest son to one at the age of 13. That Haksar was endowed with an exertional mind is obvious from each page of this enchanting book, which evokes and invokes an India of the early decaded this century. I am glad to have a authentic an account of this period from a man I both respect and admire.

This volume ends in July 1929, whe after getting a high first in his matriculation, Haksar goes to Allahabad to stubents, chemistry and biology. He was to stay in Prayag till 1935. Volumes and III will, I have little doubt, as and III will, I have little doubt, enrich the depleting stock of decent goodness and uprightness in our game lous age.

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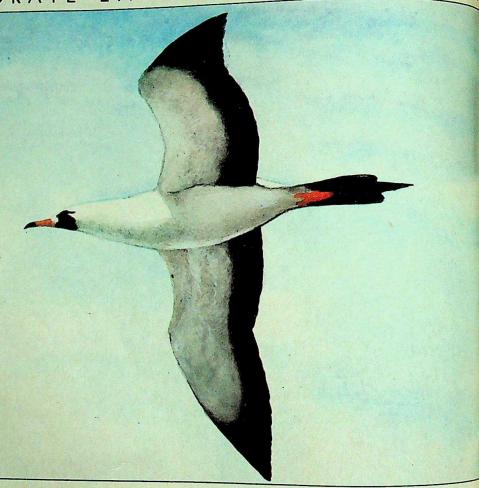
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IF you were to catch a train or plane to Bangalore, disembark, head for the bus terminus and board a state roadways vehicle for deep Mysore, you might chance upon the small township of Malgudi. If you decided

treak journey, and take a stroll rugh Kabir Street, you just might chishtof Nagaraj sitting on the pyol his house staring vacuously into are. If you bothered to wait long

Narayan: unflogging pen

HAWAN SINGE



EXCERPT

life is getting more and more complex. All that I seek is freeom, peace of mind and scope to mile my book. For that I have to epend on others. The pundit is robably holding for more having been a gambler all slife. lamgoing to show that the will be written without his Merference. The story of Narada nown to everyone in our counn, One does not have to be a midittotalk about Narada. I can bidifisit down and recollect all stories my grandmother told thile she held me down on talapcoaxing ine to swallow the forced between my lips.'

enough you'd see Sita, his wife, stalk out, heckle him, and send him scurrying to the market to run an errand, or scuttling indoors to engage in a domestic dispute that they didn't want you, and the neighbours, to hear.

Alternatively, if you went off to shop at Coomar's Boeing Sari Centre on Grove Street. amid the hubbub, you might find Nagaraj hunched over an accounts register, an island of workmanlike calm in a choppy sea of jostling, purchasing womenkind. There are other places where you might run into him. In Ellaman Lane, quaking as Kavu pundit blasts him for being unlettered in Sanskrit. Or by the riverside, endeavouring to meditate on Narada, the trouble-creating celestial being, whose life story Nagaraj wishes to re-tell.

All in all, the world of Nagaraj flows like the river that runs past the back-yards of Malgudi. Occasionally it breaks bank, occasionally it meanders, occasionally it experiences turbulences, but mostly it conforms, flows with an unhurried calm, appears unchanging to the eye, bends to pressure without losing its essence, and is rich with inner echoes.

It is this laid-back existence that Narayan records. The central episode of the book is the entry of Tim—Nagaraj's nephew—into his life, and the turmoil that comes in its wake. Tim drops out of college, works in a club, keeps late hours, swills on occasion, and finally marries a girl from Delhi who coaxes her harmonium to shrill decibels.

Nagaraj's peace is shattered; he can no longer concentrate on writing his opus on Narada; he is inexorably drawn into the whirligig of his nephew's life. This is reminiscent of Jagan in The Vendor of Sweets, but in this case Tim is no serpent shattering Nagaraj's Eden. Simply because Nagaraj's paradise has always been a marred one: his brother has always bullied him, his wife dominates his daily life, and virtually anyone can intimidate him. But Nagaraj is incapable of anger or malice. Such irritation as he feels is expressed in an interior monologue, and never allowed to rise to the surface: Nagaraj will not contribute to the complicating of his life.

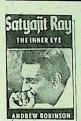
As night falls and you board the bus out of Malgudi, you realise Nagaraj and his town are so completely uneventful that only the finest of writers could bring them to life. You look out the window, and in the gathering mist there is the apparition of a tonsured man pushing 84 years, writing on with an implacably calm, confident, tireless flow. Just like the perennial river that runs through Malgudi.

—TARUN J. TEJPAL

Summing Up

First-rate biography of Ray

SATYAJIT RAY: THE INNER EYE by ANDREW ROBINSON Rupa & Company with Andre Deutsch Price: Rs 75; Pages: 412



THE problem with celebrity biographies often is there is so much to write about and yet there is so little that hasn't already been said. It is, therefore, easy to sympathise with somebody writing a biography of Satyajit Rdy.

Andrew Robinson has, however, managed to combine research with knowledge and analysis to produce what could become an enduring work of reference on the technique and narrative bril-

Ray: specialist appeal



EXCERPT

He has the supreme self-assurance of genius but not its arrogance. Glámour, great wealth and arbitrary power never excited him before and still do not. Inside, he is still the quiet, private teenager who would break into a fever at the thought of going up to the front to collect a prize. An appetite for publicity in an artist is a feature of modern western life that Ray had not acquired; he remains as open to new experiences and encounters as he ever was... 'I feel one pronounces fewer judgments as one grows older', he says, 'The important thing is to keep one's senses alert and keep working.

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liance of the cinema of Ray.

The Inner Eye notes that justice cannot be done to Ray without an understanding of world cinema of all kinds, western and Indian classical music, as well as an informed appreciation of the language, literature, music, religions and history of Bengal. But this is not the main achievement of this biography.

Essentially, the volume becomes more than a reference text because of Robinson's ability to pinpoint the humanness of Ray's cinematic inspiration. In this context, Ray's comments on the French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson can well be applied to his own work: "His work is unique in its fusion of head and heart, in its wit and poetry...the deep regard for people that is revealed in his Indian photographs, as well as in his photographs of any people Aptly, Robinson singles out the trilogy as a watershed in world cine for it heralded the arrival of a genius iserve the s riveting originality. Like De Sica's 8: cle Thief, Ray's Pather Panh Aparajito and Apur Sansar displayed of persone artifice. Authenticity was the tout stone of his actors' performance. r-tacking

layur i

Ray believes, or so Robinson cla that Charulata is the only perfect film irts with has made. Based on a Rabindrana Tagore novel set in 1880, the scripte with the conflicts surrounding the late with the check Bengali women in the late nineles century. Charu, the neglected wifed ally, take newspaper editor and owner, lonely a childless, develops a relationship wi her insouciant brother-in-law, Amal hit all up order to mould Tagore's story into all Ray had to strike a delicate balantonse from between western and Bengali elemen

Ray explained this fus his biograph "Charulata is a sto which may not be deci rooted in Bengali tra tion. It has a westernqu ity to it and the film shar that quality."

Robinson writes Ray's warmth, urba humour and nostalgial the Victorian Calcutta the Bengali bhadral Whilst on the hunt h props to suit the perior settings of Ghare Bain Ray would acquire of d'art and bric-a-bracfu people's houses, thensh them into his Ambass dor. On one such trip. R binson too bumped aliq Calcutta's potholed roal crammed next to Raya the driver. He writes could think of no oth world-famous film dire tor used to operation quite like this."

The biographer can faulted on one ma count. There is far much detail-every from Kanchenjunga Mahanagar is examin

with a tiresome exactitude, Con quently, readability is often sacrificed the interests of an overly knowledge account. In some respects, Rayishel maker's film maker. In The Inner Robinson reveals, what some filmen have always maintained, that Recipe cinematic achievement is specialist not popular in its appeal.

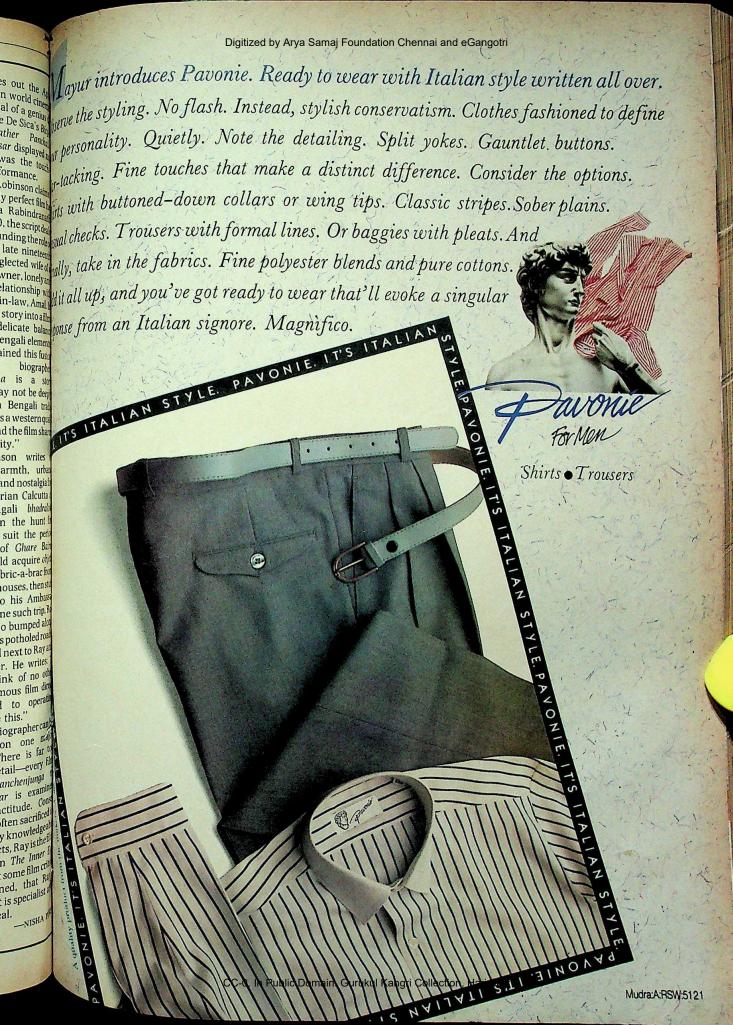




Stills from Pather Panchali (top); and Charulata: shunning artifice

anywhere in the world, invests them with a palpable humanism."

Many Ray admirers will find the first few chapters, where Robinson dwells at length on the Ray family tree and his early years, a bit redundant. The best chapters are inevitably on the films.



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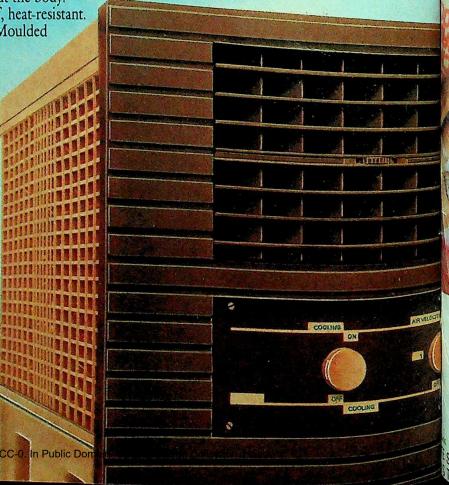
And marvel how, at a turn of the rotary switch to the desired air velocity, Symphonys twin centrifugal forward-curved blowers (similar to those in a split AC) deliver continuous gusts of cool air. Silently.

Of course, they will ask you about the water tank.

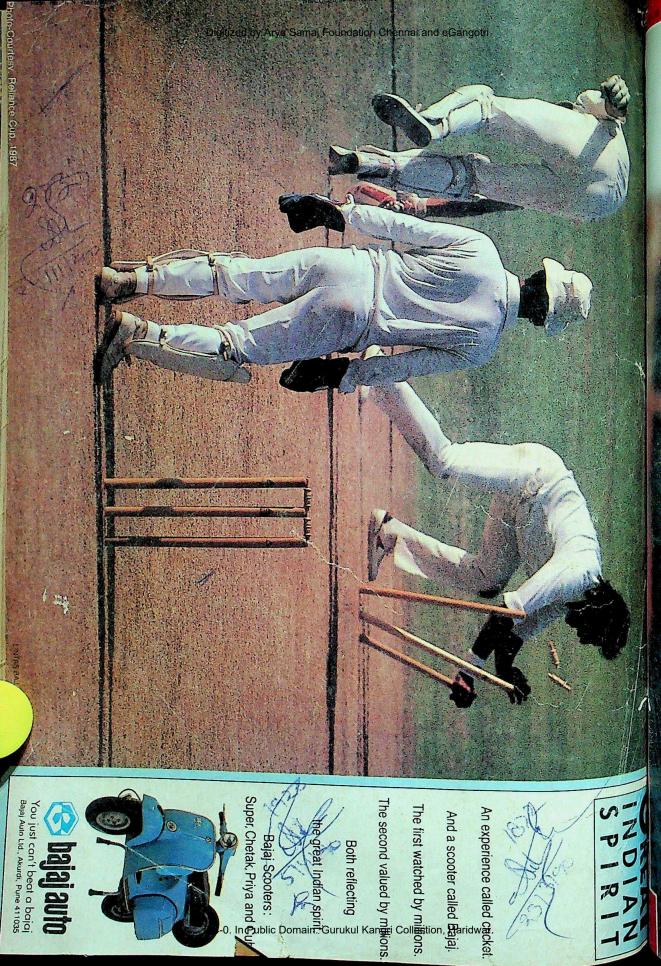
Floor them with true statistics. The tank can hold nearly 55 litres. For upto 8 continuous hours of comfortable cooling.

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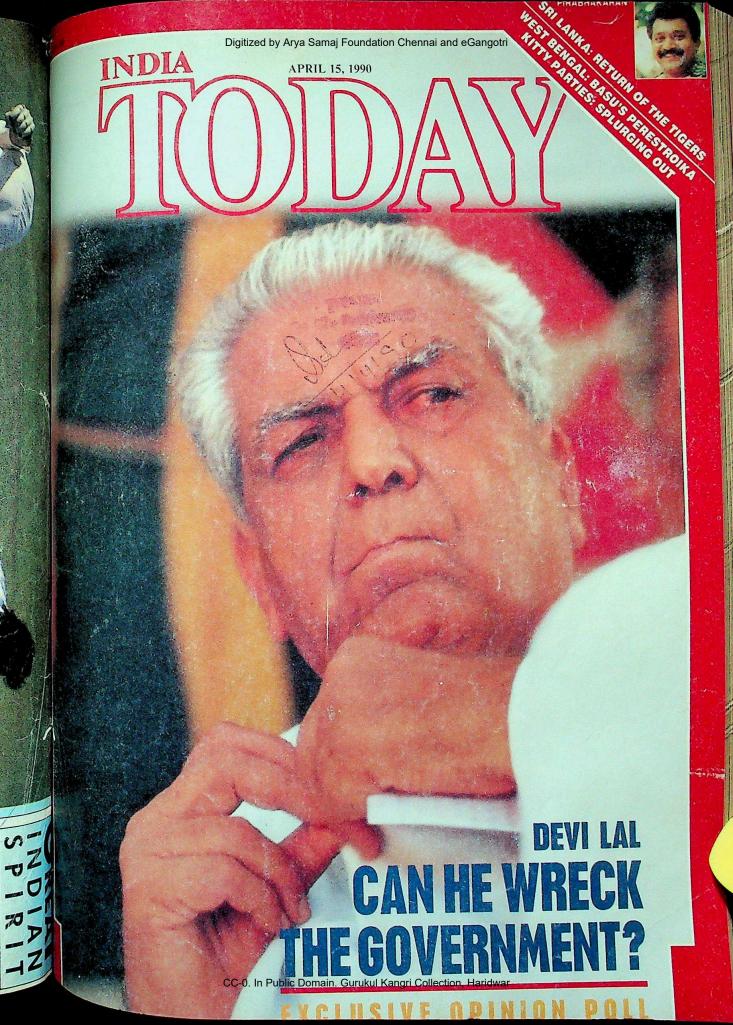
Why? A special ball-valve stops and start the flow of water as and when necessary.

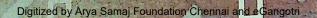






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The Kitten

The kitty party

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locking the Boat

fri Lal is determined to ensure that whamdoes not spell the death-knell of his son afrakash Chautala's political career. Even if Ecans putting the National Front Governand the brink of disaster. But is the Tau y capable of undoing the Government, or he for once stepping out a bit too far?

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The Kitten Brigade

The kitty party is no longer an occasion for and housewives to kill time exchanging mestic inanities and eating home-made shes. Now it has become an arena for sentatious one-upmanship, where the rich aithe not-so-rich congregate to indulge in cass displays of status and wealth.

PECIAL	FEATU	R E	72



Freedom at Midnight, Almost

Amid high emotion and in the presence of the world's political leaders, Namibia awoke to freedom last fortnight. But sobering down the celebrations were the economic challenges that the infant nation faces. For India, a discordant note was struck by Rajiv Gandhi's efforts at upstaging V.P. Singh.

SPECIAL	REPORT	22
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Confronting the Dragon

Contrary to expectations, the National Front's first budget has not been a harshly anti-consumer, pro-rural one. Its main thrust is combating the deficit. However, though the budget ostensibly strikes at the rich, the forces of inflation it is expected to unleash will hurt the middle class and the poor the most.

BUSINESS......86



Lengthening Shadows

In the twilight of his life, former President Zail Singh is nostalgic and ruminative, mulling over the errors and omissions of a long life rich with achievement and incident. In the manner of most people whose best days are behind them, Zail Singh feels the days gone by were better than the present, as were the people.

CHANCING	SCENE	64
CHANGING	SCEN E	UT



Coming Home

India's longest and most expensive military engagement has come to an end with the IPKF completing its withdrawal from Sri Lanka. Meantime, the LTTE has taken over the areas vacated by the Indian forces, and is rapidly establishing an unchallenged sway over them. An on-the-spot report.

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Cover photograph by PRAMOD PUSHKARNA

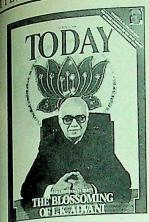


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SPECTACULAR SUCCESS

The disenchantment of voters with entrist parties, especially the Congess[l], has resulted in the BJP's spectacubr success in the recent assembly electons ("Saffron Seer", March 31). Though the BJP has clearly defined poliits communal bent is bound to denate other religio-ethnic groups in the country.

New Delhi

ANIL KUMAR

SOUL-SEARCHING TIME

People are fed up with the Congress(I)'s ways as can be seen by the results of the recent assembly elections neight states and the Union territory of fondicherry ("Storm in the Offing". March 31). It is time the leaders of the party analysed their mistakes and took orrective measures.

thubaneswar

DHANANJAY PATRO

ELECTORAL FARCE

The Election Commission's decision to countermand the poll in the entire Meham assembly constituency has only confirmed the fact that the electoral process had been reduced to a farce there In the Hot Seat", March 31). Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala should own moral responsibility for the rigging and violence and quit office.

DEVENDRA CHACHRA

CONTROVERSIAL DEAL

"A Sordid Saga" (March 15) clearly hows that the Rajiv Gandhi government aduly favoured the purchase of A 320s. remiling all objections raised by officials

belonging to various ministries as well as the Planning Commission.

Bhubaneswar S.K. GHOSH

The Rajiv government has been at the receiving end of the A 320 aircraft purchase deal. The Government took the decision to buy it only after the airworthiness of this aircraft was proved. And it is incorrect to blame Rajiv Gandhi for everything just because of the Bangalore aircrash.

Bangalore K. CHIDANAND KUMAR

■ While the possibility of kickbacks in the Rs 2,400-crore A 320 deal cannot be ruled out, the crash at Bangalore has also put a question mark on the aircraft's fly-by-wire technology.

SRINIVASAN UMASHANKAR

The Government has done well to ground the entire A 320 fleet. Before introducing such sophisticated aircraft, it should have ensured that all airports had suitable equipment and landing facilities.

Bombay

S. SANTHANAM

■ It appears that former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, who is a pilot himself and who spent some time in an Airbus A 320 cockpit at the Paris airshow, got carried away by the fly-by-wire technology. And in his zeal to catapult India into the 21st century, ignored all opposition to the purchase of this aircraft.

Mysore

M.S. RAMAKRISHNAN

■ It is painful to know that the relatives of some victims of the Bangalore aircrash were asked to parade the morgue to identify the badly mutilated. burnt bodies—a barbaric practice not followed anywhere in the world. In 1973, when Mohan Kumaramangalam died in an aircrash, his body was given to his widow after identifying it through an ante and post-mortem dental data analysis. Since I was involved in the identification, I wrote to the then minister for civil aviation, Karan Singh, who promised the formation of a forensic odontological identification team, which I offered to train free of charge. But Karan Singh had to leave and the matter ended

After the Kanishka crash. I wrote to the then prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. After several months, I received a reply

from the Air Safety Department asking for detailed suggestions. Though I sent them in April 1985, nothing happened.

Odontological identification is being successfully practised all over the world because dentitions hold an infinite number of characteristics which are as individual as finger prints.

Calcutta

DR ARUN GANGULI

SHEDDING TEARS

It is strange to read that former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi is feeling frustrated over the situation in Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab ("I feel frustrated", March 15). He became the prime minister of the country in 1984 with a massive mandate, but he didn't utilise it to solve the problems.

Solapur

S.G. SWAMY

CHANGING SCENARIO

The dramatic upsurge in East Europe ("Ocean of Change", March 15) and other communist countries for a western-style democracy indicates the maladies of communism which has failed to fulfil the people's aspirations. The present revolution has cracked the seemingly invincible monolith. One hopes that winds of change will blow over entire Europe.

Karahiya, Uttar Pradesh ANIL KUMAR YADAV

DEEPENING CRISIS

The Kashmir problem is getting worse by the day ("Hedging the Bets", March 15) as the National Front Government has not been able to do anything substantial about Pakistan's overt support to the militants. The dissolution of the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly has only compounded the problem as the responsibility for restoring law and order in the state has fallen on Governor Jagmohan's shoulders.

Muzaffarpur

KHWAJA JAMAL

- That an administrator like Jagmohan is at the helm of affairs makes one feel confident that the present unrest in the Kashmir valley will be contained. But the governor faces an uphill task. USHA VENUGOPAL Bangalore
- The scrapping of Article 370, thereby allowing all Indians to buy land

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and settle down in the valley, and the liberation of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir can only help solve the Kashmir problem. C. ROHINI

CONFUSING BUYERS

In "Faking the Master" (March 15). M.F. Husain refers to a leading gallery in Madras from where the fake paintings originated. The artist perhaps has his facts right, but in a city where there are a number of leading galleries, his statement naturally makes art buyers suspicious. As a gallery owner I wish Husain had been more specific.

Madras

GEETHA MEHRA

RETARDING GROWTH

The militancy of labourers supported by opportunistic politicians has had an adverse impact on the growth of industry in Kerala ("Labour Pangs", March 15). If this trend is to be reversed, workers must evolve a leadership from within their ranks which will be rational and will not necessarily have to depend on its political affiliations for decisions. Ernakulam V. RAMANATHAN

Although there is widespread resentment among the people against extortioti by Kerala head-loaders, the Government has not taken any action against them so far. Labour hooliganism must be dealt with firmly.

Bombay

T.M. VENUGOPALAN

DISPARAGING REMARK

In the write-up on the Nehru Centenary Committee ("Axing Fears", March 15), the remark that "it was this committee that gave the country the muchmaligned Mera Bharat Mahan slogan" has upset me gravely. How can Mera Bharat Mahan be a derogatory or disparaging slogan? The committee worked to commemorate Jawaharlal Nehru and its publicity campaign was positive for India and its heritage.

New Delhi

SHEILA DIKSHIT

A BETTER BET

India has been able to achieve a decisive military edge over Pakistan because of its missile development programme ("War Games", February 28). Missiles like Akash. Trishul, Prithvi and Agni, once developed, will be far more economical and lethal than aircraft which are prone to anti-aircraft missiles.

New Delhi

APOORV PANDEY

UNFAIR LAW

If a person living in Srinagar can purchase land in Bangalore, why shouldn't someone living outside the state of Jammu & Kashmir be able to buy it in Srinagar ("An Article of Faith" February 28)? And if one can't buy it because of Article 370 of the Constitution, it should be scrapped.

Durham, US

K. RAJALAKSHMI

NOV

GRANDIOSE PROJECT

If the US Disneyland occupies only 2.000 acres of land, why does Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala need as much as 28,000 acres to construct the amusement park in Haryana ("Disneyland Drama". February 28)? On the one hand, he advocates the farmers' cause, and on the other, he plans a project which will deprive them of their agricultural land.

Calcutta

RANAJI BASU

CONTENTIOUS ISSUE

There is no denying the need for supportive measures for the upliftment of backward classes in the country ("A Brewing Battle", February 28). However, reservation of jobs and seats in educational institutions deprives those candidates who deserve them on the basis of their merit.

Bombay

NIRMALA BELLARE

NOT A BIGOT

I have studied the role of Tipu Sultan as a ruler for writing a play commissioned to me by the Asian Artists Associ-("Communal ation of London Casualty", February 28). And I am convinced that he was not a bigot, a communalist or a tyrant, but a highly tolerant man. He was also the only Indian king who fell on the battlefield while defending his kingdom.

London

SHAMSUDDIN AGHA

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Auto sea

UNINSPIRING RESEARCH

"Engineering Success" (February 15) gave a rather simplistic explanation for the reasons why Indian students stay on in the US or decide to return home. While a graduate assistantship or a faculty position at a top US university provides an opportunity for tremendous research, there is a whole range of second-grade US universities where research is uninspiring. As a result, many of us look forward to working in India. CHANDRA VENKATARAMAN Los Angeles

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RANAJI BASU

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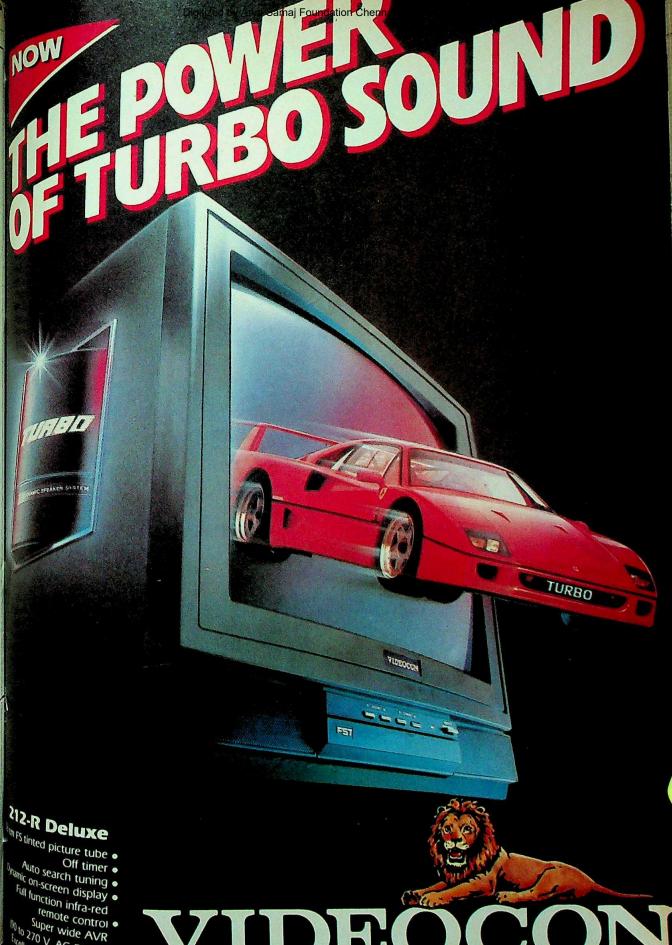
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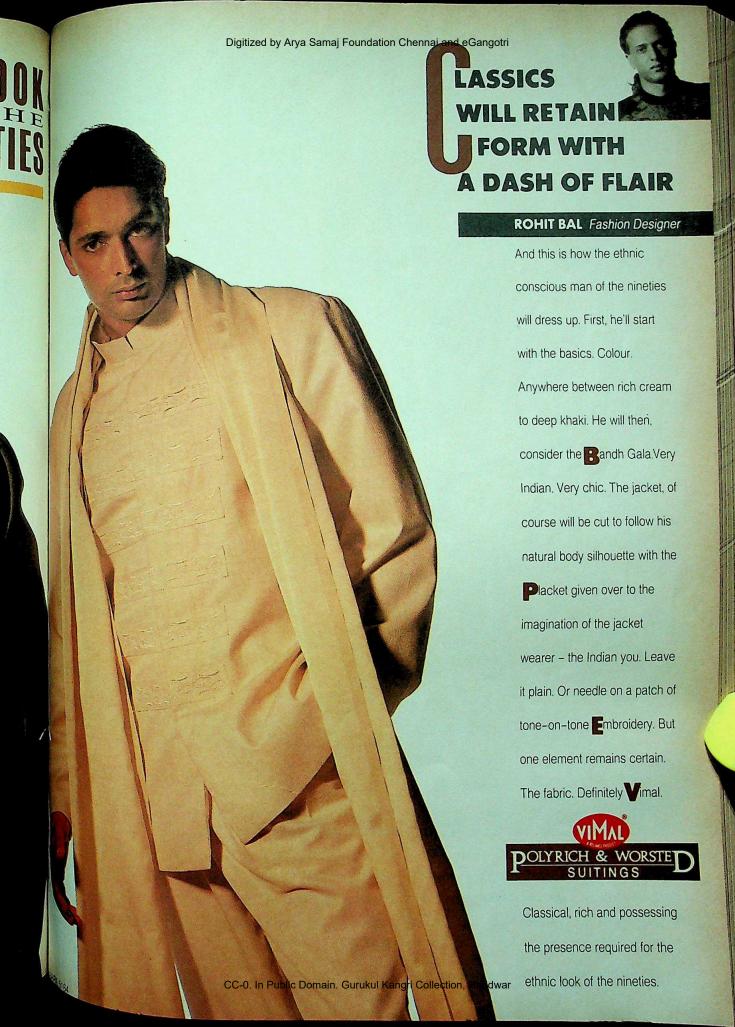
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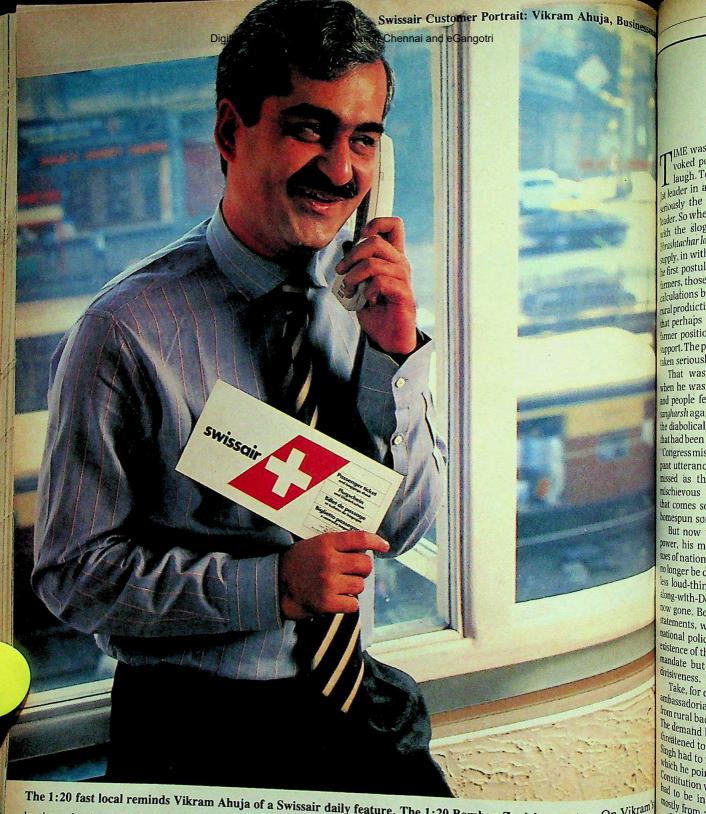


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More Rural Than Thou

TIME was when Chaudhary Devi Lal's utterances provoked people in this country to sit up and listen. To laugh. To nod their assent. Or to disagree and debate the I laught in a spirit of earnestness that comes from taking shously the thoughts and pronunciations of a national kader. So when he denounced the Rajiv Gandhi government with the slogan "Woh kuhte hain, bijlee paani hatao aur inishtacharlao'' (their plank is 'out with electricity and water apply, in with corruption') the nation paid heed. And when in postulated the theory of waiving all loans given to gmers, those who disagreed with him did so on the basis of aculations based on budgetary compulsions and indices of pralproductivity. On merit. And even then his critics argued hat perhaps Devi Lal was being forced to take these proimer positions because of the very nature of his base of

support. The point is, that he was aken seriously.

, Busines

That was four years ago, when he was in the wilderness and people felt good about his unaharsh against what he called the diabolically vested interests hathad been created by years of Congressmisrule". And his flippant utterances were often dismissed as the product of the mischievous sense of humour hat comes so naturally to the homespun son of the Jat soil.

But now that the Tau is in power, his mouthing off on ismes of national importance can no longer be dismissed as harmks loud-thinking. The laughalong-with-Devi Lal days are now gone. Because some of his

statements, which he now insists should be translated into policy, have not only begun to threaten the very tistence of the National Front Government and its popular mandate but also to create an atmosphere of dangerous

Take, for example, his prescription that 50 per cent of all and assadorial and judicial posts should be reserved for people tom rural backgrounds. It was no off-the-cuff flight of fancy. The demand became one of the grounds on which Devi Lal breakened to quit his cabinet post. And Prime Minister V.P. which had to respond to him in a high-level communique in which he pointed out that judicial appointments, under the Constitution were a matter in which the Chief Justice of India had to be involved, and that ambassadors were selected

That a pobl of senior foreign service officers. The tragedy in all this is that a prime minister has had to Naste valuable time giving his deputy a lesson in civics. But the even proof and the second s betten greater tragedy is that national importance has been Nent to a matter that defies all norms of economic and social what what defies all norms of economic and social Since not pray on earth, is a rural background?

Since nearly 80 per cent of all Indians live in rural areas, resumably all would qualify as ambassadors and judges derthe proposed new dispensation. But what, pray, is even a rural area? A panchayat? A gram sabha? A mofussil town? A tehsil? A market town mandi?

And what of individuals? Even the Tau seems confused on this score. Having earlier put the crown of rural distinction on the head of Vishwanath Pratap Singh, he has now begun to question the prime minister's rustic qualifications. Can anyone answer the question whether V.P. Singh, born in the rural area of Manda, educated in Colonel Brown's public school in Dehra Dun, and elected to public office from Allahabad and Fatehpur, is rural or urban?

ND what of members of Parliament? The present Lok A Sabha—the ninth in India's history—boasts the highest ever number of members, some 74 per cent, who are graduates. And about 27 per cent of them hold post-graduate

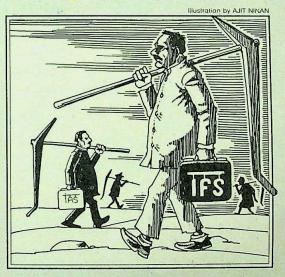
degrees. Does this level of education represent an urban or a most universities are situated in urban areas. So, is a person born in a village to a prosperous landowning family near Aligarh and un-rural?

rural background? After all, who does his schooling in the town and then graduates from the university there, to be considered rural (remember, he was born in a village) and given a preference in the foreign service? And should a former slumdweller from Bombay, who has struggled against all economic odds to obtain a law degree from a college, suffer a 50 per cent reverse disqualification just because, in the eyes of the Tau, he is

Actually, this is simplistic thinking because it ignores the fact that even without any redistributive social engineering, rural folk have already begun to gain tremendous strength in the political arena. In the current Lok Sabha, for example, agriculturists constitute 40.4 per cent of the total membership—the majority.

It is also dangerous thinking. As it is, the country is divided into religious groups, castes, subcastes, organised labour, unorganised classes, industrial workers, farm workers, gazetted civil servants, non-gazetted officers, working journalists, 'non-working' journalists, ad nauseam ad infinitum. And this plethora of groups competing for crumbs from the national economic cake of goods and services is under threat of being even further divided into warring groups by the Government's reservation policies.

What Devi Lal and his supporters may achieve, if they continue to push their hare-brained theory of artificially slicing off a large chunk of this cake for this so-called "rural," class, is to create yet another category of reservationists. This is a bad practice. Not only because it tries to make political reality out of social mythology but also because it seeks to create, through divisiveness, a new and pampered elite at the cost of competence and competitiveness.



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Tao of English

• The doughty Devi Lal's success with trenchant oneliners in Hindi has encouraged him to try the art in English. When the Janata Dal elected V.P. Singh as prime minister sidelined contender Chandra Shekhar through a game plan in which the Tau



was an accomplice, he bellowed the end result to reporters in a rare burst of English prose: "A matter of strategy!"

Recently, Devi Lal was again besieged by reporters with questions on his son's and grandson's involvement in booth-capturing during the Meham by-election. Unperturbed, he defended his elder son Om Prakash Chautala while pouring scorn on the younger one, Ranjit, for conspiring with the Congress(I) to wreck the Janata Dal image.

A reporter persisted: "Would you consider taking Ranjit back?" After giving one deep and dirty look. Devi Lal shot back: "Main hypo...", (As far as hypo...) and there the chaudhary fumbled. Finding himself completely at a loss, he turned to his press secretary and asked him: "Oh chhore, tu ke kehta hai vo hypo, hypo...vo ke hove?" (Hey, kid, what's the hypo...hypo...stuff you talk about?) "Hypothetical," said the press secretary promptly.

reporter and said: "Main hypothetical savaalon ka jawab nahin deta." (I do not answer hypothetical questions).

Political Jinx

 Political parties exult in attributing their electoral defeats to every reason other than their own misdoings. But none has ever gone as far as

At a conference of party executives last fortnight, BJP President L.K. Advani said room number 5 of Parliament was jinxed. The BJP was given the room for its office, he said. after it won 34 seats in the 1980 general elections. And in the very next general elections, the party was decimated to a single digit presence of two seats in the Lok Sabha.

As a consequence, the BJP was asked to move to a smaller room. Room number 5 was then allotted to the Telugu Desam which emerged as the largest opposition party in the 1984 elections. And now, as the results of the November

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



general elections show, the Telugu Desam has been swept off its feet with its strength of 30 in 1984 declining to two.

If Advani's reasoning is taken seriously by other parties, as is highly likely, room number 5 will have to be converted into a museum or it will Devi Lal turned back to the gather political cobwebs.

Draupadi Factor

 As the popular Sunday morning tele-serial has entered the crucial phase of the great war, the Mahabharat theme of a struggle between the good and evil is becoming an obsession with most of the politicians. "We are the Pandavas," claimed Janata



Dal spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy last fortnight during an informal chat with press reporters.

This immediately provoked questions regarding identification of the party stalwarts with characters of the epic. Meaningfully glancing in the direction of Maneka Gandhi, who was also present at the meeting, they wanted to know who Draupadi was. Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate, sensing Maneka's discomfiture, quickly said: "Yes, we are the Pandavas minus Draupadi." Maneka, looking in anxiously from the sidelines, heaved a sigh of relief.

But are the Pandavas complete without Draupadi, the journalists persisted. It was the day that Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal had withdrawn his resignation and, to the great relief of partymen, had ended the brief crisis the party had been thrown in. Now it was spokesman Jaipal Reddy's turn to respond: Well, the Janata Dal is accommodation.

our Draupadi." The party cannot be easily disrobed. Disdhotied may be the more accurate phrase.

Elusive Office

 Shankar Dayal Singh who lost the battle for the Bihar Janata Dal presidentship to Ram Dhan recently, thought his political misfortunes had reversed. On the basis of a call from Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's PA, informing him that his name had been shortlisted for governorship of Gujarat, Singh thought he had already assumed charge

He spoke to the Patna press about his new assignment and was called 'governor designate' in the reports. "I'm going from J.P.'s workplace to Gandhi's birthplace," he said philosophically. Calls to his house were greeted with "this is the governor's residence". Accompanied by his family, he flew down to Delhi without confirming his appointment. He even enjoyed several fare-



well dinners.

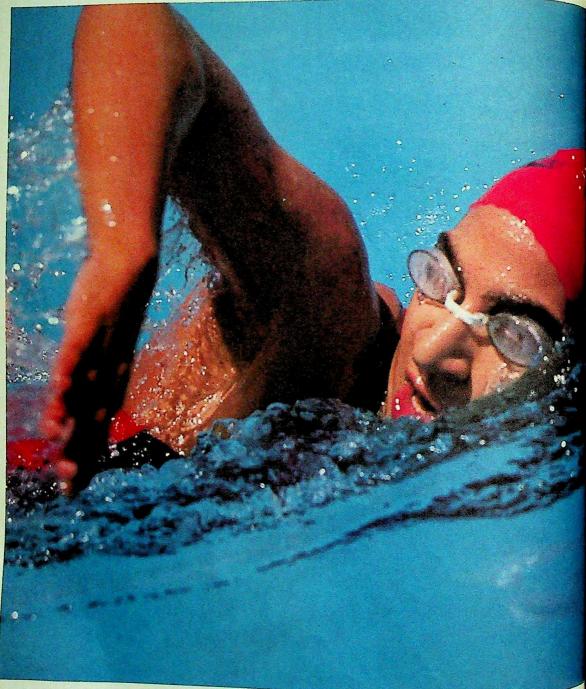
Though Singh has been in Delhi now for over a monththe first few days of which he stayed in Gujarat Bhawan the gubernatorial office continues to elude him. As his optimism wanes, he has shiftpersonal ed to humbler

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When she's not neck-deep in water, Anita may be seen making waves in a smart grey pant suit of sparkle polyesterand-wool, appropriately named "Sapphire".

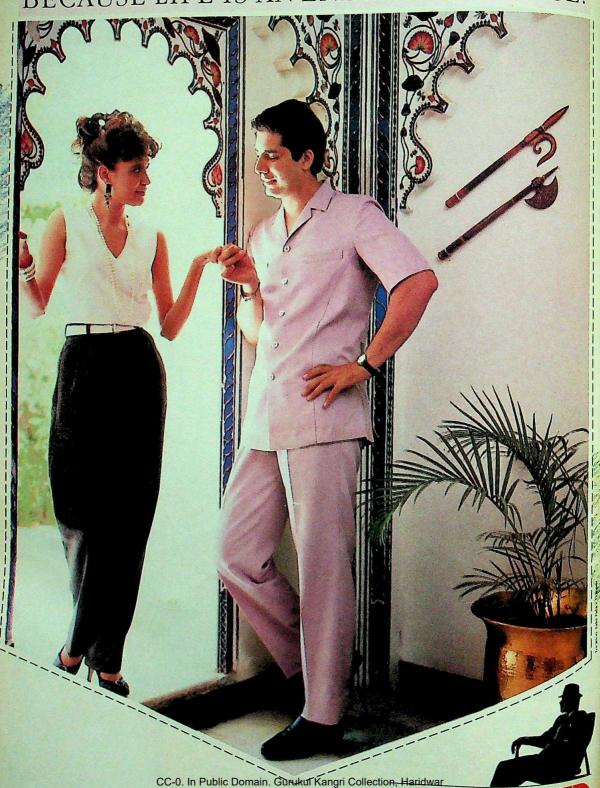
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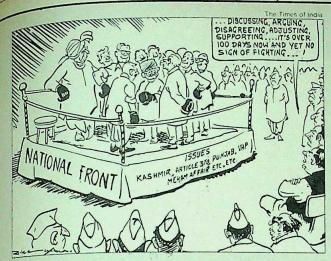
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Youhave been fighting this weak man for the last three-and-a-half years and result is known to all.

IV.P. SINGH, in response to Congress(I) MPs' charge that he is weak, in Parliament

You just sit down.

IN.L. FOTED AR of the Congress(I) to Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairperson Najma Heptulla, after she asked him to withdraw his remarks casting aspersions on the Chair

Acharya Narendra Dev had named me when I was born.

■ RAJIV GANDHI at Acharya Narendra Dev's birth centenary celebrations

The Acharya probably realised that the name 'Rajiv' would belong to the lder of the Opposition. ■ MADHU DANDAVATE

The future of the Congress(I) lies under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi. My the is in Maharashtra and that is where I intend to stay.

■ SHARAD PAWAR in India Week

lwill start a newspaper even if I have to sell my lands, my property. Even if I by to give up my chief ministership. The press has forever tried to destroy me.

■ OM PRAKASH CHAUTALA in The Times of India

Why attach such importance to newspapers? They are read every morning sold as raddi every afternoon.

■ DEVI LAL in The Telegraph Colour Magazine

It is one thing to like someone and another to love. My relationship (with Minister V.P. Singh) extends to love. Syed abdullah bukhari. Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Delhi, in The Illustrated Weekly of India

Yes, (I know Ramesh Sharma) very well. We are business partners.

■ AJITABH BACHCHAN in The Hindu

Who is Bachchan?

■ RAMESH SHARMA in The Hindu

Nobody asked us to investigate the Pitco documents.

MOHAN KATRE, former director of the CBI, in The Illustrated Weekly of India

The killers of Mrs Gandhi and General Vaidya are the heroes of our

lam thankful to all my fans who prayed for me to get married to a good man. prayers have been fulfilled.

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FANCYING STONES

While most people in the city of joy are dying with fear as the dreaded Stoneman stalks the streets, there are some who have not let it get them down. In fact, going by this Calcutta policeman's case, they have even been able to find a humorous side to the whole affair.



Not that the entire police force agrees with the fun. For recently when the abovementioned policeman threatened to attack a colleague with a stone, an unnerved director-general of the West Bengal Police was not amused. There wasn't a trace of a smile even after he was informed that the policeman was merely playing the

Stoneman for a fancy dress competition at a police fete.

Though the ingenious policeman came within a stone's throw of winning the first prize for his charade, his chief would have none of it. No way was he going to glorify the pavement killer. Instead, the award was given to the impersonator of the genuine tramp. Charlie Chaplin.

ALMS AND THE MAN

Saffron is not always the colour of renunciation. For example, consider the case of this shani baba who descends on the streets of Ghaziabad every Saturday.

The baba, who walks around with a jhola slung on his shoulder instead of the traditional begging-bowl in his hand, manages to arouse the people's curiosity immediately. But most of them go on with their business as usual.

Except for one discerning housewife. Noticing some pretty awkward-looking bulges in the baba's jhola, the housewife became a bit suspicious. So, she confidently marched up to him, grabbed



the *jhola* and quickly overturned it even before the open-mouthed godman could say *jai shani devta*. And out spilled wrist watches and ball point pens.

Evidently, the baba's time had come. He was driven away from the neighbour-hood by the angry housewife who generously pelted him with her slippers.

STARRY SIMIAN

While Sridevi's antics are providing entertainment on screen, there's another star who's regaling audiences off screen. Every day she walks in for the matinee show at a Fatehpur cinema hall and sits in the balcony with her eyes glued to the silver screen. Occasionally,



she gets up to do a little jig.

What's so unusual about that? Nothing, except that our star-struck cine-watcher is a little monkey. In fact, she's so hooked to the celluloid world that she's fought tooth and nail all attempts to stop her from entering the hall. Now, gatekeepers have realised that she isn't quite monkeying around and

means serious business. So, they have resigned themselves to the fact that this little simian needs her daily fix of stardust.

And the management of the theatre certainly is not complaining. Since the monkey's presence gives the cinema hall a curiosity value, huge crowds throng its premises.

AMOROUS DRIVER

Next time you take a cab, you have more than your wallet to worry about. This is what an unsuspecting bridegroom discovered recently as his baraat party trundled through the hills near Dehra Dun in a hired Maruti van.

When the group stepped

out for some refreshments, a shy, bejewelled bride was left behind in the van along with the driver. Taking advantage of the situation, the driver suddenly sped off.

Throwing all timidity to the winds, the bride lifted her ghungat and began screaming gustily. The baraat party then got its act together and



began following the Maruli van. They managed to catch up with it at a point where the traffic was held up.

The van driver realised that he had been cornered, but as a last-ditch stand he rolled up all the windows and locked himself up inside. The glass was smashed and the bride finally rescued.

18

RIBALD RITUAL

■ Osho may be dead, but his spirit still lives on. Particularly at Bhagvati temple at Kodungallur in Kerala where every year droves of reverent devotees indulge in a weeklong orgy of singing and dancing.

The concept behind the



bacchanalia is quite bizarre. Followers believe that the temple's deity is a virgin who revels in listening to obscene songs. As a result, devotees come from far and near, and, in a seemingly irreverent manner, not only belt out lewd songs, but also sway sensuously in dances of abandonment.

And that's not all. The ribald ritual continues unabated as frenzied people go about with sticks in their hands, beating the temple roof violently and throwing turmeric powder all over the temple quadrangle. The temple deity is obviously one virgin who sees more vulgarity than most.



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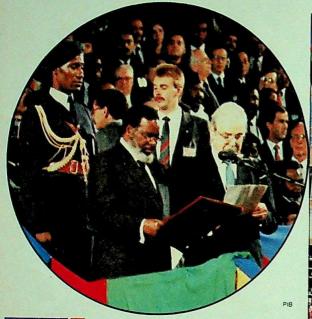
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NAMIBIA

Freedom at Midnightlm



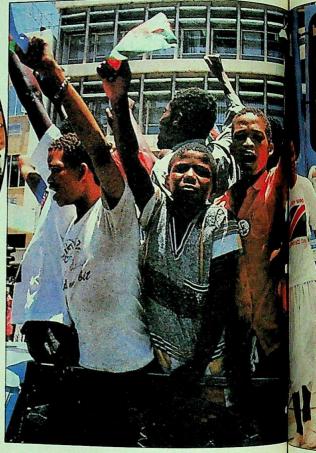
IN the end, it was not just Namibia that embraced freedom last fortnight in a ceremony full of electric emotion, but the entire civilised world. In the vastness of the African night, as the chanting rhythms reached a

crescendo of celebration, it seemed that all of Africa had awoken to a new and dramatic dawn. To be witness to the birth of a nation evokes an emotion that is uniquely sublime. Even more so when the nation in question represents the crumbling of the last colonial bastion in Africa.

The setting was anything if symbolic. Windhoek (pronounced wind-hook), the beautiful and scenic capital of the new nation, still lay draped in the white-dominated ambience of South Africa; the clean streets and wide boulevards, the colonialtype mansions and the elegant shopping arcades, virtually deserted except for its predominantly white citizens. Even the colourful 'Namibia is Free' posters plastered all over Windhoek seemed to wear a hesitant look, as if unsure of accepting that Namibia was finally making its tryst with destiny.

That, perhaps, was understandable. For over a century, Namibia (population 1.3 million) had been imprisoned in its colonial cocoon, first under the Germans and then, since 1920, mandated to South Africa under its barbaric policy of apartheid. But now, all that was coming to a cathartic end. Midwifed by the United Nations, Namibia was readying to be born free, and with a passion and pride that is uniquely African.

Hours before the historic midnight ceremony, Windhoek's Independence Athletic Stadium was a riot of colour and celebratory motion. Almost 50,000 people, blacks and whites alike, jammed every available space chanting anthems to freedom and dancing together in that liquid rhythm that is the true soul of Africa. And, dominating the emotion-charged scene was the most familiar symbol of Namibia's bloody and protracted



Nujoma sworn in (left) and celebrations follow

Namibia may have won political freedom...

struggle for independence—one hand raised high in a clenched fist salute as the galaxy of world leaders trooped onto the daisto play their part in the making of history.

In the colourful chaos and confusion, the VIP dais resembled a football scrum with leaders of frontline African states and revolutionaries like Yasser Arafat and Muammar Gadafi jos tling for space with South African President F.W. de Klerk and host of special invites including India's former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi who attracted applause from the gathering but also criticism back home for his ostensible bid to upstage India official representative, his successor V.P. Singh-

But the night really belonged to just a handful of people on the wided stage. While the stage will be the stage with the stage will be the stage. While the stage will be the stage will be the stage will be the stage. crowded stage. UN Secretary-General Javier Peres de Cuellat under whose steward la court de la court d under whose stewardship Namibia earned its freedom. South African President de Klerk who showed courage and pragnatism in underwater tism in underwriting that freedom, and the bearded, grands therly figure of Sam New York therly figure of Sam Nujoma, the new Namibian President and Mamibian wo

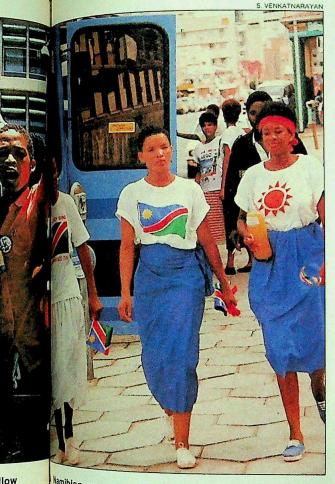
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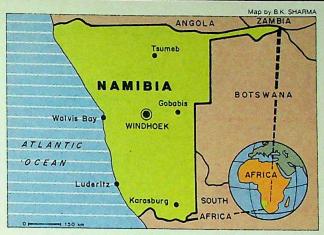
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But economic freedom is a distant dream.

tof the South West African People's Organisation (swapo) had spearheaded the nation's fight for independence. by the loudest cheers were reserved for the frail, whiteman with his fist raised high in triumph—Nelson dela, a singular symbol of this night of joyous liberation. id if Namibia's freedom at midnight was inadvertently the lowering of the South African flag and the raising bild's new national colours occurred 22 minutes past the med hour—it was buried in the emotional frenzy that tatheoccasion. As the dazzling fireworks lit up the night, it where the dazzling fireworks lit up the night, it heralded a new dawn for Africa. In a speech punctuated applause, de Klerk's impassioned pledge that, "The season place has been placed as the subple of South the has passed for Namibia and for the whole of South carried the ring of conviction. Namibia's freedom and reached the ring of conviction. Namibia's freedom serious of Nelson Mandela were symptomatic of the fact Patheid and the white domination of South Africa was of dragging to an end.



Nothing symbolised that more than the presence of the large number of whites who have elected to stay back in Namibia (over two-thirds of the country's 80,000 white population). Equally significant was the surprisingly large contingent of whites from South Africa who had arrived in Windhoek to participate in the celebrations. Their emotional reaction at the moment when the freedom flame was lit in the stadium was illustrative of the new mood in South Africa, Said Rhea Smith, a young white woman from Capetown: "Africa is my country. I will be the first to celebrate the end of apartheid. After tonight, that end is already in sight." The row of white South Africans beside her, raised their clenched fists in a collective gesture of agreement.

But that could still be a long and rocky road. Freedom is an adequate substitute for heady wine as the celebrations continued throughout the night. But morning brings the hangoverand reality. Reality is Windhoek's black township of Katutura (literally "nowhere else to go"). Here, amidst the filth and poverty and crowded hovels, it is easy for dreams to die. A century of racist degradation and discrimination has deadened the spirit and sapped self-confidence. For many inhabitants of Katutura, the only escape so far has been into alcoholism.

The blacks of Namibia may have achieved political freedom last fortnight but economic freedom is still a distant dream. Apart from a minuscule number of black leaders and senior officials. the rest of Windhoek, affluent and elegant, is populated entirely by whites. Says Peter Simasiku, a Windhoek building contractor: "Sure, we can now buy houses anywhere in the city but how many blacks can afford to?" The average income of the 35,000 white households in Namibia is 20 times that of the country's 3,10,000 black households.

More significantly, the whites dominated the administration and the blacks are largely untrained to take over. Says General Prem Chand, commander of the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) that policed Namibia's transition to independence: "The whites who have elected to leave for South Africa are the top level of administrators. Replacements will have to be found soon."

Additionally, Namibia's mineral-rich economy (diamonds, uranium. gold, tin, cadmium) is still dominated by South Africa. Some 85 per cent of the goods used in the country including 50 per cent of the food, is imported.

In political terms, the scenario is equally fragile. Nujoma, though a highly respected figure, is largely illiterate and worked as a railway loader before joining swapo to fight for freedom. Endemic to all of Africa is the bitter rivalry between the various tribes who now form the 10 political parties in Namibia. In the untag-policed elections last November, swapo failed to get a two-thirds majority, winning 41 seats in the new National Assembly with the opposition parties gaining 31 seats. Yet, for all that, Namibia has the opportunity to become the

showcase of black Africa. It now has what is the Dark Continent's only multi-party democracy and, more important, it's the most economically viable state outside South Africa. Nujoma, though relatively inexperienced and illiterate, has revealed an encouraging measure of pragmatism, having changed from a shrill demagogue into an advocate of reconciliation, reassuring the whites and placating his political enemies. The result is that there has been no major exodus of whites from the country as was widely

expected earlier. Even more encouraging was the presence of a wide range of world leaders at the independence celebrations in Windhoek, expressing solidarity and economic support to the new nation. Further, with inexorable winds of change blowing across South Africa under de Klerk, Namibia now has a greater potential for the kind of prosperity and

stability denied to most other independent African states. Namibia's riotous celebrations, thus, may have only just begun.

F Namibia was experiencing a process of learning, so also was one of the guests at the celebrations, V. P. Singh, on his first foreign foray since taking over as prime minister. The contrast between his style and that of his predecessor, Rajiv Gandhi, is as stark as it is educative. For starters, V.P. Singh, in a dramatic departure from previous practice, invited along representatives from all the major political parties including Rajiv.

Ultimately, however, Rajiv succumbed to his old failinglistening to the wrong advice-and flew off a day earlier to Lusaka where he hitched a ride to Windhoek with Kenneth Kuanda, President of Zambia. Rajiv's original gameplan was clearly a crass act of political brinkmanship; he was under the impression that Nelson Mandela would be on Kuanda's aircraft thus giving him the opportunity to upstage his political foe V.P. Singh by arriving arm in arm with two of the most respected figures in Africa. In the event, Mandela arrived separately but Rajiv's attempt to upstage V.P. Singh continued unabated.

Characteristically, V.P.Singh remained unfazed. Asked on the flight to Windhoek about Rajiv's actions, he brushed it aside with the remark: "Once we leave the borders of our country, we are all Indians." But senior Foreign Ministry officials were less charitable. "Rajiv may have been a special invitee and done more than most for the Namibian cause. But this was V.P.Singh's first official visit abroad. He should have played it low key or arrived with the prime minister," said one.

Had he done so, Rajiv would have been chastened by the experience. On Rajiv's foreign visits, the Air India 747 was labelled the 'Champagne Express'. The aircraft was totally refurbished with the entire front section being converted into sleeping quarters for Rajiv and Sonia as well as a conference room. Flowers were flown in from distant capitals and special crystal and crockery ordered for the flight.

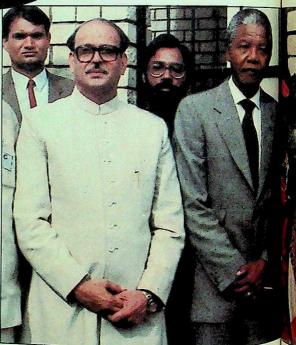
In contrast, V.P. Singh's only request was that the seat next to him be left vacant. But by then Air India had already made comparatively minor alterations—the 14-seat executive class

section on the upper deck had been converted with two bed supplied and he being installed for the prime minister and his wife bed supplied and he section on the upper deck index in the section of the upper deck index in the prime minister and his wife, leaving space for four people. The rest of the aircraft's configuration of the prime minister and his wife, leaving space for four people. The rest of the aircraft's configuration of the prime minister and his wife, leaving a private constant in the prime minister and his wife, leaving a private cons tion was left exactly as it is for a normal commercial with his flight. In the event, the change proved never the exactly as it is for a normal commercial with the exactly as it is for a normal co

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smaller aircraft would have mean and most im four refuelling stops and a 30 stast meeting hour flight. Even so, the contra tial states. He was in evidence at every stage was dering the

V.P. Singh's simplicity and put the prim down-to-earth approach dos ortary of State not stop him from asking for madze, Brit advice or help openly. He had alela, Nujoma read the briefing books, but sings with the during his first chat with journs the Preside lists on board he was asked a Aligned Mov particularly complicated question of the Organ about South Africa. Instead of a vague The Mubarak answer, he looked around for his aida and its place none of whom were present. "Please cal is their backing Ronen Sen (joint secretary in the Print Mashmir situa



Singh and Rajiv at Windhoek reception (left) and Indian

The contrast of styles between V.P. Singh a

Minister's Office)," he announced, "tell him I need his help Rajiv's glib talk and smart one-liners made good conbut eventually served to conceal the substantive elements of the visit. Moreover, the substantive elements of the visit. of the visit. Moreover, the protectiveness of his aides their cultivated arrogance—meant that every trip was labeled a major success with led a major success without parting with adequate information to back their ale tion to back their claims. V.P. Singh and his aides were

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oumber two r lust diplom was also New Del ter realised t 3the wrong He wanted t with two bed coming and honest, mainly because of the lack of arrogance is wife, lac guphancy that characterised the previous regime. al commercial commercial winds with his counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with the counterparts at Windhoek made no exaggerlived necessity with wife, learing private conversation, key aides present at V.P. Singh's aft's configure private conversation, key aides present at V.P. Singh's aft's configure private conversation, key aides present at V.P. Singh's after some private private and the state of the sta wednecessan schims except to say that it was a "substantive visit" in the ent 20 hope what had met and become acquainted with ent 20 hours who are vital for India's foreign policy and heak to the carefully backers who are vital for India's foreign policy. adheok. In fact what he shades who are vital for India's foreign policy ambitions received to the shades who are vital for India's foreign policy ambitions

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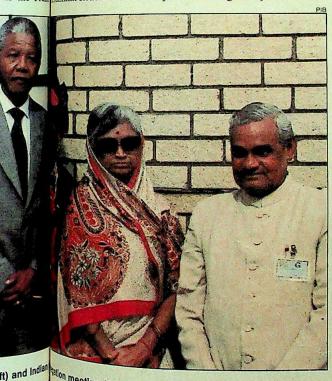
But talk But taking sagh invited the members of the all-party delegation to his ald have means and most important opening diplomatic engagement—a ops and a 30 that meeting in his suite for the leaders of the frontline to, the contra ranstates. He also invited Rajiv who had the grace to attend. at every stage considering that his visit was a short one, the list of leaders simplicity and put the prime minister was significant. They included US approach despreary of State James Baker, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard om asking for manadze, Britain's Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, Nelson penly. He had stated and de Cuellar. Equally important was his g books, but sings with the heads of two crucial international organisaat with journe is the President of Yugoslavia, currently chairman of the was asked Higned Movement, and Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, chairrated questing of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU).

teadofavagu [heMubarak meeting had an added significance. Egypt has d for his aids good its place as a leader of the Arab states and New Delhi nt. "Please cal subeir backing on its most daunting domestic challenge in the Pring Machinir situation. Similarly, his meeting with James Baker, continuity in India's economic and bilateral policy."

But beginners do make mistakes and V.P. Singh was no exception. Because of the limited time. he had a choice of attending an official afternoon function or meeting with Mandela and Baker. Clearly, the Mandela-Baker meetings were crucial and it was decided to skip the function. To his subsequent embarrassment, the master of ceremonies read out the names of dignitaries from a list which had Rajiv Gandhi down as 'ex-prime minister of India'. What was announced over the loudspeakers was 'Executive Prime Minister of India'. With V.P. Singh absent, all eyes swivelled in Rajiv's direction and he stood up to acknowledge the applause. He had finally upstaged V.P. Singh.

Ultimately, however, that proved only a minor hitch compared to the 'substantive' element of the visit which turned out to be V.P. Singh himself. Personal relations are crucial in international diplomacy and in the words of an aide, V.P. Singh's 'no surprises' approach and his 'transparent sincerity' endeared him to most of the leaders he met.

Rajiv himself was uncontrite about his controversial role in Namibia. He says that Kuanda was insistent that they arrive together in Windhoek. "I've been very busy here," he told INDIA TODAY in his hotel room at the Kalahari Sands, and then launched into what he termed his action plan for Namibiasetting up scholarships to train Namibians in 'human resources development' like civil service, engineering and technicians "in the best institutions in the world". Asked about the finances, he



Nelson Mandela and his wife, Winnie

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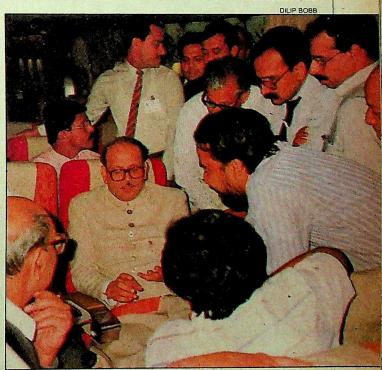
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Just diploman in the US Administration, had more to it lust diplomatic niceties. A substantial portion of the Was also devoted to discussing economic relations New Delhi and Washington. Said the aide: "The prime der realised that some people in his government have been the wanted signals by making statements about the Pespi He wanted to reassure the Americans that there would be



V.P. Singh chatting with journalists on the flight

Singh's down-to-earth approach is effective.

patted the folder next to him saying: "It's all here."

Considering that the V.P. Singh Government is planning the same strategy—giving Namibian personnel administrative and technical training in India—Rajiv's parallel onslaught does appear contradictory. But that was entirely in keeping. Even in far-off Namibia, it seems, the Rajiv-V.P. Singh show must go on.

-DILIP BOBB in Windhoek

CAN DEVI LAL WRECK THE GOVERNMENT?



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he thundered in blind rage. In a the of political intrigue and subterphe Janata Dal—the main constitudie Government—was left rattled. the old patriarch was angry it was without reason. His frustration medfrom his sense of being cornered. the king maker who, as he himself prions so fondly, made V.P. Singh minister merely by telling a small kwas now fighting a losing battle to ethethrone of his favourite son who is edock for his outrageous rigging at ras were having the worse, within his party he was ag for a full light and accused what he had accused f "opposition runing exactly what he had accused we fall ve colleagues of treating vernment was 1 as: a liability.

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had been building for some time partly out of a sense of indignation and partly out of alienation. The colossus of Haryana politics was finding the going tough in the corridors of Krishi Bhawan, where he presides over the Agriculture Ministry. Running a ministry consisting of six secretaries, where piles of files needed to be cleared daily was certainly not his idea of running the "raj from a charpoy". Nor was a ministry, however important, his idea of coming to power at the Centre. He wanted to run the Government and felt slighted when major diplomatic appointments were made without his having a say in them. He felt left out of the decisionmaking process of the Government.

And now with his son Chautala, 55,

under attack, even his home turf, Haryana, was being threatened. There were other irritants: the party had nominated Ram Pujan Patel as chief of the Uttar Pradesh unit defying him and his loyalist, Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav. The final straw was the visit of his arch rival for the kisan constituency, Industry Minister Ajit Singh, to Meham, leading the chorus for Chautala's resignation.

By the time he came to attend the

party's Political Affairs Committee (PAC) meeting at Prime Minister V.P. Singh's house on March 16 he was seething with rage. The final provocation came even before the meeting formally began. Devi Lal caught Arun Nehru and Ajit Singh exchanging views on party discipline and value-based politics. Presuming the reference was to his son, Devi Lal burst out: "I am the one who should be talking about party discipline. Patel has been made president of the Uttar Pradesh Janata Dal unit when he has been openly criticising me on the reservation issue. Ajit ko Meham jaane ke liye kisne bola...mein sab jaanta hoon. Mujhe pata hai, deputy prime ministership ka pad sab ko chubh raha hai. Mujhe is pad ki parvah nahi hai, mein abhi is se asteefa deta hoon." (Who asked Ajit to go to Meham? I know my being the deputy care for it. I am resigning right away.)



Sharad Yadav were the only ones to react. Both asked him to come back, but there was no stopping him. Arun Nehru's instant reaction was that Devi Lal would never follow his verbal threat with a letter. But the letter came within an hour.

For the 60-odd hours after he submitted his resignation, party leaders made a beeline to his Willingdon Crescent residence to persuade him to change his mind. But Devi Lal sat unmoved hoping to turn the knife slowly by displaying his clout within the party. He further hoped to display his strength at his housewarming party which was scheduled for the day. However, it proved a rather anaemic show of strength as no more than 25 of the 45 loyal MPs invited turned up. Of these too a majority counselled restraint. Meantime, V.P. Singh calculatedly decided to ignore his resignation, avoiding the temptation of making even a telephone call.

By the following day the equations were clearer and some of the bluster in the Devi Lal camp was fading. Expecting at

least half-a-dozen party heavyweights to openly rally behind him, an anxious Devi Lal found that only one minister, Manubhai Kotadia—minister of state for water resources-offered to put in his papers. Three chief ministers—Mulayam Singh Yadav, Chimanbhai Patel and Laloo Prasad Yadav—flew in to Delhi, not to throw their weight behind him but to persuade him not to resign.

HE very loyalty configuration of the Janata Dal was now going against him. The party organisation is still dominated by old leaders from the Janata Party and the Jan Morcha so he had little support there. In the Cabinet too he was totally isolated with Jan Morchaites like Arun Nehru, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, Arif Mohammed Khan and socialists such as Madhu Dandavate and George Fernandes too coming out openly against him. BHAWAN SINGH

was the move of an enraged warrior, to sack arch rive state and cabinet colleague Ajit Singh from the rivo state secretaryship of the Janata Dal p secretaryship of the Janata Dal Partingal to leav liamentary Board was the desperate as sed such a co ture of a man fighting with his back tothe landa Dal's i wall. "Imade your mother lose her depois or structure, in Haryana. I will fix you as well," he intional loyal threatened Ajit Singh, and launched inhere new in the control of the control diatribe on his late father Charan Single retto evolve "Thank God he does not know my fathar and meaning name," a senior cabinet member was shuster was heard remarking half-jokingly, underly this real po ing the level to which the Devi Lal style manded over politics could sink.

Something had obviously gonedrass. Aps and a ly wrong with his calculations. cally wrong with his calculations though for nearly tw his more diehard supporters still arguet planata Dal. w that he could at least wreck the Janat tana stalwar Dal, if not hijack its leadership. For the santly strade venerable Tau is much more than the party which

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DEVILAL

"I rule sitting on my charpoy"

DEVI Lal's petulant resignation from the Cabinet plunged the three-month-old National Front minority Government into its first major crisis. The 75-year-old politi-· cal heavyweight discussed the reasons for his resignation in an interview with Senior Correspondent HARINDER BAWEJA while relaxing on a charpoy in the back lawns of his spacious Willingdon Crescent bungalow. Excerpts:

Q. What made you resign from a government you had been instrumental in building? Couldn't the problems have been sorted out internally?

A. Ram Pujan Patel has been using public platforms to criticise me. As if in reward, he was made the Uttar Pradesh Janata Dal's chief. Ajit Singh and Arun Nehru were instrumental in getting him the post. And then Ajit Singh went off to Meham. Who asked him to go there? He wasn't authorised to go to Meham. He wants disciplinary action to be taken against Chautala, what about himself?

Q. One view is that you resigned in order to save your son.

A. The resignation had nothing to do with Chautala. Didn't I accept Ranjit's resignation? Isn't he also my son? Why

are you personalising the issue. Chautala is the only Janata Dal chief minister to have been elected unopposed.

Q. Don't you think you are harming the Government with your resignation?

A. I resigned from the Government, not from the party. Kamjor hone dene ka sawal hi nahi hai (There is no question of weakening the Government).

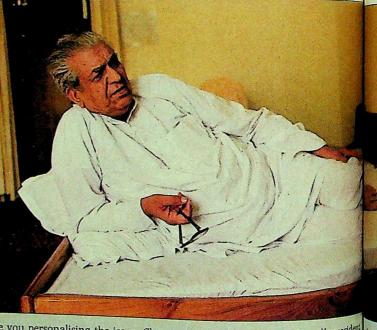
Q. Now you have removed Ajit Singh from the parliamentary board's secretaryship without being authorised to

A. Ajit claiming to be the secretary is like some Babbar Khalsa activist appointing himself the organisation's selfstyled general. I am the board's president and naturally I want my secretary to be a man I can trust.

Q. The party's constitution lags down that the secretary-general of the party is the secretary of the parliament tary board. But Yashwant Sinha is not even a member of the board.

A. Kaun si party, kya constitution Party to abhi bane gi. (Which party, what constitution? The party still has to be formed). The party doesn't even have membership roll yet—except in Haryana

Q. Why did you agree so readily b withdraw your resignation? Consider ing V.P. Singh's letter to you only saf



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A. Shayad isi th ke raj kart orat nahi hai. on't need a layam and dris (chief mi dris (lieutena own men

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member wa jibuster was what he perceived ngly, undering whis real power, the sway he once Devi Lal style manded over a substantial number of sly gonedras Lita Dal chief ministers.

lations though for nearly two years since the birth of ers still arguat planata Dal, which the down-to-earth eck the Janas stalwart had midwifed, he has ership. For the gantly straddled the power structure more than the party which inherited the limited

infrastucture of his rump of the Lok Dal in Haryana. Devi Lal calculated that the

y choosing Meham and his son as the issues for his last stand Devi Lal had made a major blunder.

real clout in the long term would come from the number of his loyalists he was able to position in the key states, and then on the party's list of candidates for the Lok Sabha elections-his man Mulayam Singh Yadav brought home about 50 MPs. When it came to appointing the party's office-bearers in the states his men bagged a big chunk of the posts.

Besides, after V.P. Singh, he is the only Janata Dal leader with a base cutting across state borders. Biju Patnaik may be

more popular in Orissa than Devi Lal is in Haryana today but who bothers about him in Uttar Pradesh? Mulayam Singh Yadav may collect crowds in western Uttar Pradesh but who knows him in Rajasthan? Similarly, Ajit Singh's sway does not even extend beyond Kanpur eastwards into Uttar Pradesh. But may be because of his towering personality, or his iconoclasm, or his roughhewn earthiness, or the heroism that rubbed on to him for humbling

the mighty Congress(I) singlehandedly in Haryana, Devi Lal had acquired a transregional image.

This sway reflected in the way he dominated the ticket distribution for the Lok Sabha elections. Ajit Singh may have held on to western Uttar Pradesh but in the final count, at the national level Devi Lal had beaten him at least three to one. Further, after the Lok Sabha elections he had effectively outmanoeuvred not only Ajit Singh but also V.P. Singh to secure

that Ram Pujan Patel's appointment can be reviewed but it doesn't assure that he will be removed. Even on the Meham issue he has said that it would be better to discuss it in the Political Affairs Committee (PAC).

A. I feel assured. V.P. Singh is a man of commitment. I have faith in him.

Q. What will you do if the Meham issue is brought up for discussion in the PAC? The PAC subcommittee has already decided that Chautala must resign.

A. Kya hoti hai PAC? (What is the PAC?) The committee was formed to go into Party issues. Who is it to decide ther Chautala should stay or go? It is the MLAs to decide and they all have

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Why did some of your own tel colleagues want your resignan to be accepted?

A Shayad isi liye ki main charpoy peh i ke raj karta hoon. Mujhe kursi ki at nahi hai. (I rule sitting on my cot. ort need a post.) I want Biju, ayan and Laloo to be mukhya is (chief ministers) and not mukhya (lieutenants). The others want own men in Central Hall. The

ministers must be scared of me for the same reason that the capitalists and industrialists are scared of me. I am basically a people's man interested in the welfare of the kisans. Gandhiji kehte the ki Hindustan ki atma gaon mein hoti hai, main kehta hoon ki yeh atma ab Lok Sabha mein aa gayee hai. (Gandhiji said that India's soul lies in its villages. I say that this soul has now come into the Lok Sabha). Of the 141 seats we won, 107 MPs are from

Q. What do you think is your real strength in the party?

A. (Pointing to the cot) I have brought this charpoy from home and the people have elected me. Don't compare me with George Fernandes, Hegde and others.

Q. Were you trying to ascertain your strength by your resignation? Did you resign expecting that the resignation would not be accepted?

A. Mulk ko barbad kar doon? Yehi chahte hoh? (You want me to destroy the country?) I didn't insist because of the delicate international situation. I should not have resigned at all but then the circumstances were such.

Q. What do you mean when you say international situation?

A. What's happening in Punjab and Kashmir...it's all because of international forces.

O. You said that you were being considered a liability. Who were the people who thought so?

A. People like Arun Nehru... don't

make me take names.

Q. You seem to be using resignation as a threat tactic. Earlier too, as Haryana chief minister, not only did you resign yourself, but you made your sons and the entire cabinet resign too.

A. Agar rajneeti dabao se chalti hai to aur koi resign kar ke dikha de. (If politics works through pressure, why doesn't somebody else resign and prove it?) I don't believe in threat tactics. I resigned so I could work more closely with the people and to strengthen the party.

Q. Are chief ministers Mulayam Singh Yadav, Chimanbhai Patel and Laloo Prasad Yadav your men or V.P. Singh's men?

A. Neither mine nor his, they are the state's men.

Q. Is V.P. Singh reluctant to annoy you because of your renewed proximity with Chandra Shekhar?

A. To meri narazgi koi maine rakhti hogi. Apna apna andaaza lagate hain log. (Then my annoyance must be worth something. Each one looks at it in his own way). What is wrong in meeting Chandra Shekhar? He is a member of our own party.

Q. V.P. Singh has resigned as party president in keeping with the one-manone-post principle. Will you do the same and resign as chairman of the parliamentary board?

A. The so-called principle is V.P. Singh's own view. It is not the party's decision.

chief ministerships for his loyal sergeants, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Laloo Prasad Yadav. Devi Lal now expected that this gaggle of grateful MPs, MLAs and chief ministers would respond.

Probably because of the blinding effect of his obsession with his eldest son, this masterful practitioner of the craft of winning friends and isolating enemies failed to see how the equations had changed. Even his proteges had seen his popularity falling as evident from the poor performance of the Janata-BJP candidates in Haryana, where they won only six of the 10 Lok Sabha seats. Now, with Meham his standing has fallen even further. No matter how loyal his followers are they were not prepared to sink with him. The three chief ministers flew into the capital not so much to extend support to Devi Lal, but out of the love for their own chief ministerships.

N the Lok Sabha too, Devi Lal found considerations against him. Even to his most diehard supporters it was clear that the break-up of the Government and a fresh election spelt nothing but disaster. "It was a question of either staying on or fighting a fresh election where people would beat us with chappals rather than give any votes," admitted one of his supporters. Even his ardent supporters like Sharad Yadav, K.C. Tyagi and Nitish Kumar from Bihar had made a turnabout. Tyagi did not even come to see him while Yaday persuaded him to withdraw his resignation. He should have read the signals in his embarrassing signature campaign for Ajit Singh's resignation that he launched a day before his own threat to leave: only five MPs besides his six diehard supporters from Haryana signed.

He had picked up the wrong issue at the wrong moment. And soon enough it was clear that his love for his son was not shared by even his most devoted supporters, who used it to further their own interests. Sharad Yadav used it to install his man Laloo Prasad Yadav as Bihar chief minister. The bargain: he, as a member of the five-member subcommittee of the PAC on Meham, would not press for Chautala's resignation. Sharad Yadav had his way and yet did not relent on Chautala.

Only Chandra Shekhar, sulking on the sidelines, seemed to be supporting him as indicated by his pro-Chautala speech last fortnight in Lucknow. It was to further pull his group towards him that Devi Lal thought of the stratagem of replacing Ajit Singh as the Janata Dal Parliamentary Board secretary with Yashwant Sinha who is known to be Chandra Shekhar's alter ego. An embarrassed

A Mixed Message

THE Tau and two generations of his family have grabbed the headlines into media over the past month. In early March, it began with the fall-out of the fracision of t the Meham by-election where Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal's son, political her and Haryana Chief Minister, Om Prakash Chautala, was fighting for his politic survival. The Tau's grandson (and Chautala's son) Abhay Singh was also accuse in the media of performing a more than filial job for his father in the Mehm assembly constituency.

Under pressure, the Tau put the prime minister in a spot by offering hi resignation. Though he later withdrew it, the episode had done some damage to h image of his party, the Janata Dal.

In order to obtain an assessment of the Government's performance, its stabiling and the views of the electors on the events of the last month, INDIA TORK commissioned MARG (Marketing & Research Group), the leading independent market research company, to conduct an opinion poll.

The opinion poll was carried out in the five largest cities—Bombay, Calcult Delhi, Madras and Bangalore, in rural Haryana, and in villages in the 11 larges states of the country. A total of 5,011 interviews were conducted by over 100 MARG interviewers on March 24 and 25. Here are the findings:

BETTER THAN EXPECTED

The MARG opinion poll reveals that the National Front Government has not disappointed. The balance of opinion among the respondents indicates that the performance of the three-month-old



ernment led by Prim Minister Pratap Singh is bette realls for Chau than expected.

And despite the vis lent incidents at Mehan and the subsequent po litical fall-out, even in Tau's Haryana, there's overwhelming backing for the National Front Government.

Tables by MAHENDRA RATHORE

THE GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

	Hindi belt	Non-Hindi belt	Haryana	Five metros
Better than expected	34	29	60	34
Worse than expected	25	26	20	24
As expected	24	22	11	30
Don't know	17	23	9	12

EXPECTED TO LAST

Respondents to the MARG poll were asked whether they expected the National Front Government to fall within one year or whether they expected it

to last longer.

Despite the visible squabbling h tween members of the Janata around 60 per cent of the respondent expect the Government to last out for least a year, if not longer.

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pronsquestioned in the metropolidies, the Hindi belt, and most auty in the state of Haryana, replied they believe the National Front

Government will survive for a period exceeding a year.

Even in the non-Hindi belt (which includes a fair number of states where the Congress(I) performed well in the recent Lok Sabha elections) almost half the voters expect the Government to last for over a year.



PROSPECTS FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S SURVIVAL

	Hindi belt	Non-Hindi belt	Haryana	Five metros
Less than one year	15	20	13	26
More than one year	59	46	59	58
Can't say	26	34	28	16

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AWARE OF THE MAYHEM

DIVIDED ON DEVI LAL

A majority of voters in Haryana and the metros were aware of the Meham violence. In the rest of rural India, 40 per cent of the electors and just around 20 per cent women had heard of the Meham mayhem.

All electors were informed about the Election Commission's decision

Vishwanah muntermand the poll in Meham. They were also told about ingh is bette ralls for Chautala's resignation as well as the pleas for him ayon as chief minister. They were then asked whether he espite the vis

Awareness of the Tau's proferred resignation was much higher in the five major metros and in his home state, Haryana. Elsewhere, just around half the respondents knew that the deputy prime minister had put in his papers.

Respondents to the MARG poll were also asked whether they felt that Prime Minister V.P. Singh should keep Devi Lal on as his deputy prime minister or remove him.



THE SAGA OF 'THE SON'

	Hindi belt	Non- Hindi belt	Haryana	Five metros
Aware of Meham	40	39	87	75
Not aware (All figures in percentages)	60	61	13	25

ald stay on or resign.

the metros, opinion was in favour of Chautala's mation. In other areas, there was a high proportion of atknows'. The Haryanvis, on balance, wanted Chautalato on elsewhere in rural India, the balance was tilted in of his resignation.

THE DEVI LAL RESIGNATION DRAMA

	Hindi belt	Non- Hindi belt	Haryana	Five metros
Aware	57	49	70	88
Not aware	43	51	30	12

The Tau might feel that there is some justification for his anti-urban tirade, for though metropolitan voters were divided on whether the prime minister should keep Devi Lal or remove him, the balance of opinion of the rural respondents was clearly in favour of V.P. Singh keeping the Tau as his number two in the Cabinet.

^{SHOULD} CHAUTALA RESIGN?

Resign	Hindi belt	Non- Hindi belt	Haryana	Five metros	
NOT read	44	35	32	61	
ves June	14	20	40	19	
(A) (igures in percentages)	42	45	28	20	
percentages)	2				

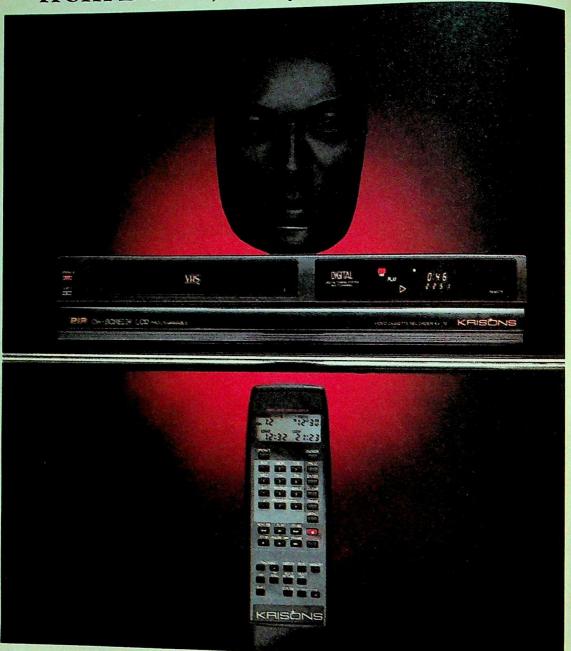
SHOULD DEVI LAL STAY?

	Hindi belt	Non- Hindi belt	Haryana	Five metros
Remove Devi Lal	16	20	12	41
Keep Devi Lal	47	35	70	42
Can't say	37	45	18	17

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quabbling b Janata Da e respondent

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suba declined the offer. To be identified The Devi Lal now meant being identified

with Chautala. Again, while the insistence on sav-Chautala totally isolated Devi Lal on the Left and the BJP it also pushed i.P. Singhinto a corner. Admitted one of becabinet members: "For a party voted power on the slogan of value-based politics it is impossible to live with the of Meham. If Rajiv had tackled Bofors early on it wouldn't have conamed him. Meham could well become VP's Bofors.

Bofors or not, the combination of noblems—from Meham to Devi Lal's gen belligerence—brought V.P. Singh keeto face with the biggest challenge of is fledgling, three-legged government.

Memories of 1979 were revived and drew snide I-told-you-sos iom jubilant Congress(I) leaders. But what bothered him most was be fact that the controversy quesioned the very raison d'etre of his government-value-based poliis, opposition to use of money and muscle in elections, and to dynastic succession. Finally Devi lal's attack on the press embarrassed a government which owed issuccess partly to media support.

Devi Lal's action against Ajit Singh made it apparent that no matter what the consequences he was going to go on fighting. Blinded by his love for his son he justified all his mistakes: "How can you accuse me of favouring my son? I also accepted the resignation of my other son Ranjit?"; "My son was the only Janata Dalchief minister to have been elected by a legislature party unopposed. So why should he go?"; "Those opposing me are anti-kisan, anti-rural, anti-Jat, procapitalist"

Within the party, besides Chandra Shekhar, the only leader of consequence who could lend support to Devi Lal could be Mulayam Singh Yadav. But he has his reasons. He resents the nomination of Ram Pujan Patel as the Uttar

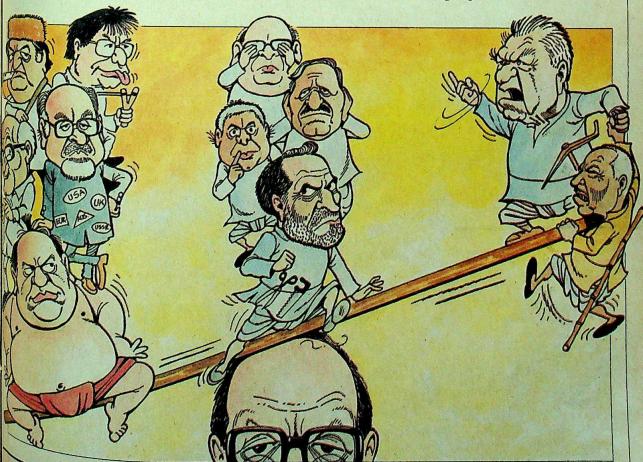
Pradesh party president. The appointment has the support of the former Jan Morcha group and the Ajit Singh faction of the former Lok Dal. Last fortnight, Lucknow saw ugly factional showdowns between them and Yadav's supporters. A meeting was held by 44 Ajit Singh supporters in the Assembly who threatened to withdraw support to Yadav if he did not accept Patel's appointment. In retaliation, Yadav's key supporters went to the press with their opposition to the appointment. Secondly, Yadav is paranoid about Sanjay Singh's return to the political arena. Since Sanjay Singh is supposed to be V.P. Singh's protege, Yadav feels that if the prime minister is locked in a mutually taxing row with his deputy he will not be

able to back Sanjay against him.

However, since his motive is self-preservation there is no way Yadav will back Devi Lal if he is out to wreck the Government. Also, even if Yadav and Devi Lal do combine in an all-out offensive they seem incapable of taking the leadership away from V.P. Singh, though they may dent the party's credibility considerably.

There is perhaps only one group that would like to see them

nwilling to wreck the Government even Devi Lal's closest supporters have refused to back him.



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do that: the Congress(I). The capital's political grapevine was rife with rumours of three-way contacts between Chandra Shekhar, the Congress(I) and Reliance, the business house most aggrieved by the change of government. Reliance Chairman Dhirubhai Ambani also happened to be staying in a five-star hotel in the city.

Later, just before he left for Windhoek Rajiv was believed to have sent instructions to the Haryana Congress(I) unit to postpone the protest rally at Delhi's Boat Club on March 28 against the Meham violence. A Devi Lal-Chandra Shekhar-Congress(I) axis seemed to be emerging. But sources close to Chandra Shekhar are emphatic that he was only trying to convince Devi Lal to back down. Says Yashwant Sinha: "The entire leadership has to share the blame for having allowed affairs to come to this pass. The problem is even if there is an earthquake in Peru Chandra Shekhar is blamed."

THE Congress(I) is calculating that whoever wins the Janata Dal's battle of attrition they stand to gain. A frustrated and hurt Devi Lal is also someone they can manipulate much to the discomfiture of the Janata Dal. To that extent the decision by the Election Commission to countermand the Meham election rather than order a quick repoll has gone in their favour as the greater the delay in sorting out Meham, the greater the controversy and discord within the Janata Dal. The Devi Lal camp would now try to delay a fresh poll for as long as possible. Normally they could have done it by getting the state chief secretary to delay the mandatory certification that the election in the constituency could be held peacefully. But in this case, Election Commission spokesmen say, they have acquired the powers to order election on their own and conduct it under their direct supervision with Central

Meanwhile, the Devi Lal camp has already given indications of its strategy. Last fortnight Vidya Beniwal, party MLA from Darba Kalan constituency near Sirsa, which is supposed to be safe for Chautala, filed her nomination for the Rajya Sabha. Since the seat will fall vacant Chautala could contest from there and fulfil the constitutional requirement of becoming a member of the Assembly before June 2. If Meham too goes to poll by then, and his opponents in the party force him to contest from there, he could contest from both constituencies. Last week Chautala also unfolded another scenario. He said that as the judicial inquiry instituted by him would hold its first sitting only on April 4 it was unlikely that the

Election Commission could hold the poll before the investigation is over.

Either way, with the Devi Lal camp standing by its lathis on Meham and Chautala, there seems little chance of a long-term rapprochement. Many in the Janata Dal, particularly the former Jan Morcha group led by Arun Nehru, Arif Mohammed Khan and Mufti Mohammed Sayeed have been goading V.P. Singh to call Devi Lal's bluff as they think he will not be able to wreck the Government. V.P. Singh himself has maintained an aloof public posture.

Sources close to him say he has decided to ignore Devi Lal's provocations for the moment as he feels that publicly joining issue with him could be damaging for him as well. "He feels that given a long enough rope Devi Lal will hang himself," said a senior cabinet member. In this V.P. Singh is only playing true to form. He seems to have learnt his art of strategic manoeuvre from none else than the fabled Roman general Fabius who excelled in not joining battle, drawing the opposing armies in, and striking when they were tired and their supply lines over-stretched.

His logic runs pretty much like this: when Devi Lal resigned, he lost some supporters. When he tried to throw Ajit Singh as the secretary of the parliamentary board, he lost some more. With each provocation he will continue to steadily weaken till one day, it will become quite easy to remove him. If on the resignation issue he appeared to have placated Devi Lal and on Meham he did not give, on Ajit Singh's removal he coldly ignored him altogether. V.P. Singh, in fact, had come out victor in the first round without even bothering to join the battle.

The test of the strategy could come soon. Perhaps as soon as the party's PAC meets and ratifies the recommendation of its own five-member subcommittee to make Chautala quit. Having already questioned the power of the PAC to take such action Devi Lal will rise in defiance once again. Even if that provocation is ignored there will be more, each eroding the credibility of the Government and V.P. Singh.

As Devi Lál gets more frustrated and isolated, his anger and consequently his nuisance value is bound to increase. There is already talk about his rustic supporters laying siege on Delhi, Tikait style. Sometime, soon enough, V.P. Singh will have to make the inevitable choice of either putting up with him and his family and paying the price at the next elections or calling his bluff.

SHEKHAR GUPTA with HARINDER BAWEJA and BHASKAR ROY

JANATA DAL

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see without a 7 hen Devi Lal who is also char. of an or man of the Janata Dal Par. axism is on th liamentary Board arbitrarily roffice-bearer sacked Ajit Singh as the secretary of the ction, overlap parliamentary board last fortnight, the initial reaction was one of comic relation red party a coming as it did after the resignation Janata Dal h drama. But its implication for the party is iar Mantar, V definitely not comical. Admits a senior ented mansio member of the V. P. Singh Cabinet: "A ank Jawahar best we have a government and certainly not a party." e don't wan

The Janata Dal is, in fact, like a huge



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without a foundation. In the abof an organisational structure, ata Dal Pr. simison the rise. And with none of tone-bearers having any clear-cut fortnight is confusion has head party affairs to a circus.

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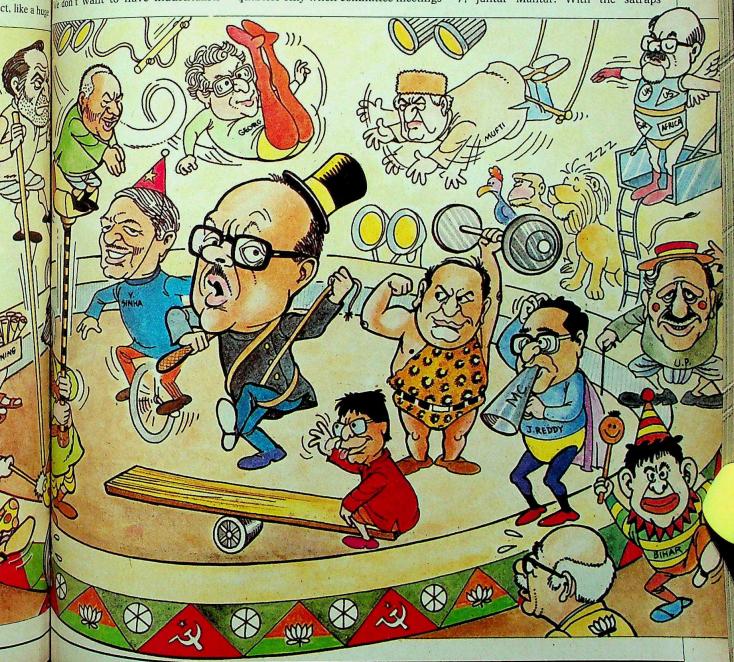
t and certainly

The pathetic state of affairs is visible at The resignation the party is th lmits a senior and mansion, in stark contrast to the ank Jawahar Bhavan, the new AICC(I) quarters, barely a kilometre away. le don't want to have industrialists

build a five-star party office for us. Since we came to power not a single sofa has been added to the office furniture," says Janata Dal Secretary Satya Pal Malik.

But such efforts to find virtue in the shoddy look seem like an effort to cover up the paralysis that has struck the party. The daily activity at 7, Jantar Mantar seems to begin and end with the evening press briefing of Jaipal Reddy, party general secretary and official spokesman. Senior party leaders visit the party headquarters only when committee meetings take place. Meetings of the party's Political Affairs Committee and the parliamentary board are held either at the prime minister's residence or in state bhavans. The office staff complains of irregular salaries and lack of other facilities.

Since there is no clear line of command, Janata Dal workers from the states gather at the residence of leaders of factions rather than at the party office. At any given time the crowd at Ajit Singh's residence is larger than that at 7, Jantar Mantar. With the satraps



well-entrenched in the states. the writ of the central leadership does not run anywhere. No general secretary in charge of a state has any say in the party's affairs there. The result: V. P. Singh himself has to take up matters with the state leaders.

Om Prakash Chautala in Harvana, Biju Patnaik in Orissa and Chimanbhai Patel in Gujarat hold the posts of both chief ministers and state unit presidents. Patnaik has even created the post of the state working president which is not sanctioned by the party constitution.

Some partymen, however, defend this near autonomy of the state units. Says Virendra Verma. Sabha member: "V. P. Singh is a true democrat. He does not impose his will on the state leadership. Instead of changing chief ministers at midnight we have allowed the legislators to elect their leader through the secret

ballot." But the fact is that the state leaders do not allow strings to be pulled by bigwigs in Delhi.

V.P. Singh's resignation as the party president, adhering to the one-man-one-post norm, has not inspired other leaders holding two posts to follow suit, notwithstanding Jaipal Reddy's claim that "a precedent set by the prime minister has its logical momentum". Of the 10 general secretaries, four are in the ministry and have little time

for party work. They are: Sharad Yadav, Maneka Gandhi, Ram Vilas Paswan and Arif Mohammed Khan. The Secretary-General of the party, Ajit Singh, is busy running the Industry Ministry while Vice-President Ramakrishna Hegde, also deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, mostly confines himself to the Yojana Bhavan.

The factional loyalties of the party's general secretaries have also affected party functioning. For instance, Yashwant Sinha, who put up an excellent performance as the Janata Dal spokesman during the November polls and later as a mediator with the BJP for seat adjustments in Rajasthan, avoids visiting party headquarters. Reason: as a Chandra Shekhar protege he feels cornered in the party set-up.

During his campaign against Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh had harped on the

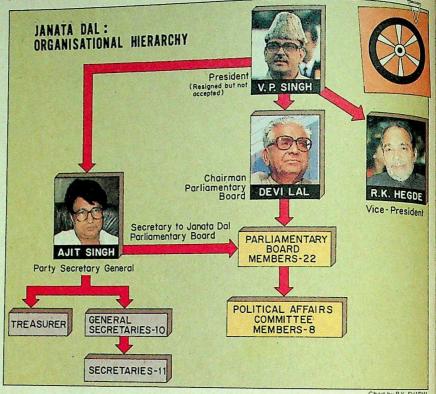


Chart by B.K. SHARMA

onfusion reigns at the party headquarters due to the absence of any clear line of command.

absence of inner-party democracy in the Congress(I). "The Election Commission should have the legal sanction to derecognise a political party which does not hold regular organisational elections," he would say. Now he is falling a prey to his own rhetoric. Despite his assurance, organisational polls in the present situation are almost impossible. "The sheer display of money power and fierce factionalism such a move will trigger can even break the party," predicts a Janata Dal MP.

Since the formation of the Janata Dal in 1988, V.P. Singh in his capacity as party president set up a host of committees. But most are virtually defunct now. Asked about the committees, a party general secretary admits: "Honestly speaking I've lost count of them."

Often important meetings of the Janata Dal's Political Affairs Committee

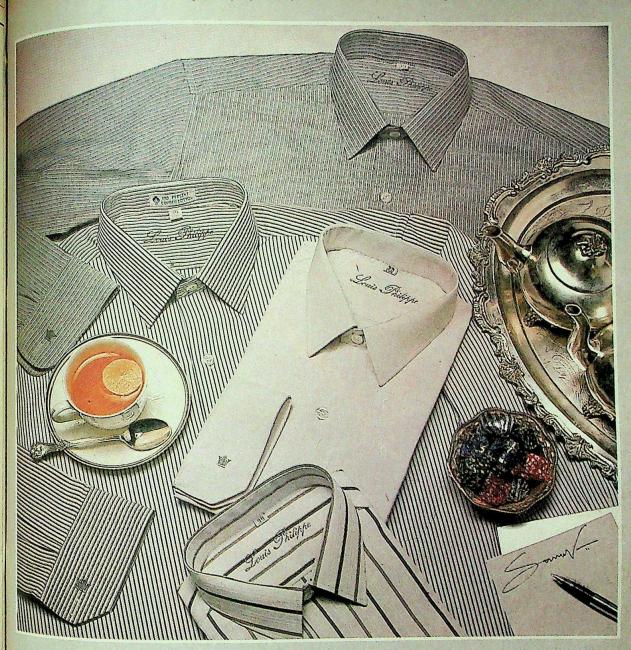
or even the parliamentary board take place without the prime minister attending. While clearing names for the Rajva Sabha nominations, every group leader was busy getting the names of his loyalists cleared. Involved as he is in fire-fighting and walking the tightrope, V.P. Singh has no time for party affairs. There is also no consensus on his successor as the party president. Madhu Dandavate, as suggested by some, is

acceptable to all groups but V.P. Singh cannot afford to miss his services as the finance minister.

There is a feeling in the party that it is time now to concretise the gains of the recent elections. Says Reddy: "The party structure must be developed to consolidate the present favourable mood of the people." There is also a realisation that with a better structure it could have reaped a better harvest from the anti-Congress(I) mood. There are also halfhearted attempts to breathe life into the organisation. Satya Pal Malik, for instance, talks of a massive membership drive to enrol party workers.

But cynicism seems to have pervaded the party. Instead of emerging into a cohesive party, the Janata Dalis becoming a conglomeration of groups headed by feuding chieftains.

—BHASKAR ROY



by B.K. SHARMA tary board orime mine clearing bha nomieader was nes of his ed as he is alking the as no time is also no cessor as idhu Dany some, is V.P. Singh ices as the ty that it is ains of the

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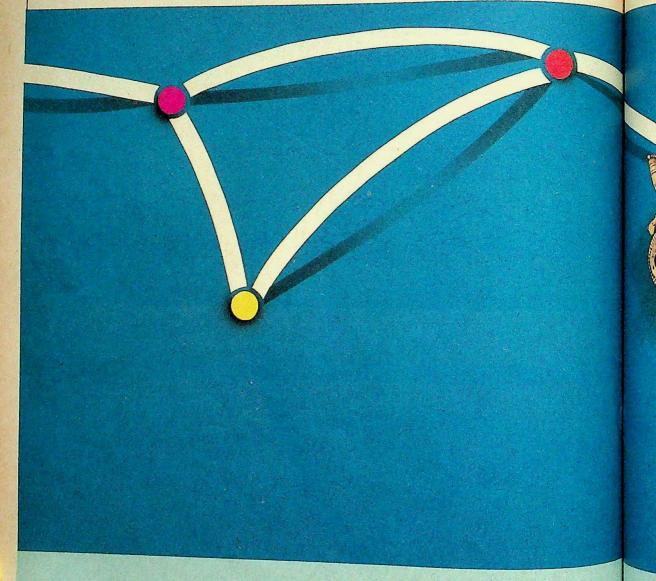
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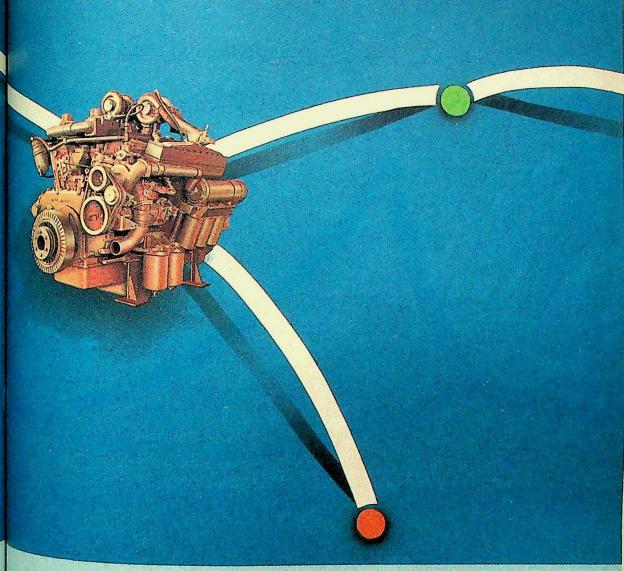
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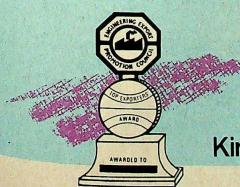
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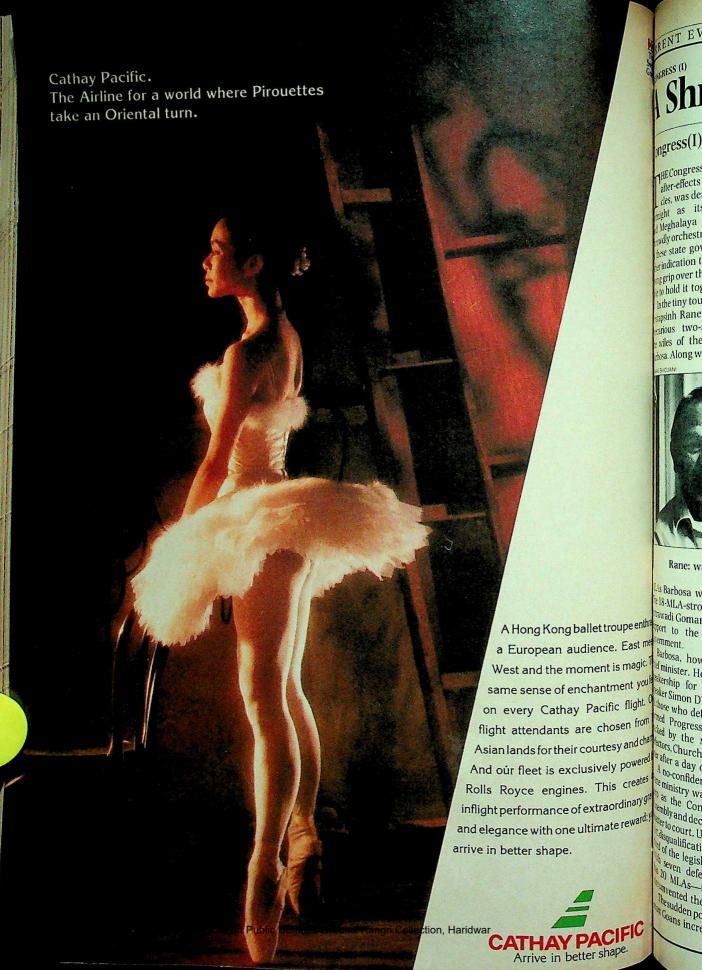
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MGRESS (I)

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GRESS (I) Shrinking Base

ngress(I) governments in Goa and Meghalaya fall

HE Congress(I), still reeling from the after-effects of the recent poll debades, was dealt two nasty blows last ministries in Goa Meghalaya were pulled down by adly or chestrated defections. The fall state governments was yet anmindication that Rajiv Gandhi is fast grip over the party and may not be hold it together for long.

hthe tiny tourist paradise of Goa, the apsinh Rane ministry which had a zious two-seat majority fell to niles of the Speaker Louis Proto MA. Along with six other Congress(I)

has been marked by a sharp Catholic-Hindu communal divide. The MGP has always been a party of north Goan Hindus. In the last assembly poll, the Congress(I) ended up as a virtual Catholic party, with 15 of its MLAs belonging to that community.

And six of the defectors from the Congress(I) were Catholics. Most of them obviously felt that it was high time Goa had a Catholic chief minister. And ironically, such a move needed the support of the predominantly Hindu MGP. Said Barbosa later: "We acted in the interest of Catholic-Hindu unity.'

In Meghalaya too, the anti-defection

This left Sangma with no option but to resign and Lyngdoh immediately claimed the support of 32 legislators in the 60member House and formed the Government. "I tried my best to persuade Sangma to correct the wrongs but it was fruitless," said Lyngdoh referring to the corruption and misrule that had marked Sangma's government.

Supporters of Sangma are of the view that the revolt was sparked by the change in the Government at the Centre. They reckon that Lyngdoh and his supporters believed that the National Front Government would not back the Sangma ministry. But Sangma, according to his supporters, had impressed Vishwanath Pratap Singh when he worked under him as Union minister of state for commerce. They point to the fact that the National Front Government, showed its appreciation of the financial management of the state by hiking its plan outlay by 16 per



Sangma: outmanoeuvred

he fall of the Sangma and Rane ministries can be interpreted as a sign of Rajiv's loosening grip over the party.



Rane: waning fortunes

Is Barbosa walked out of the party. 18-MLA-strong opposition Maharaawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) offered not to the defectors to form a

Barbosa, however, did not become minister. He could not resign from tership for fear that the Deputy der Simon D'Souza would disqualify hose who defected. So the hurriedly Progressive Democratic Front by the MGP chose one of the ators, Churchill Alemao, as chief minafter a day of high drama.

no-confidence motion against the ministry was passed by 25 votes to as the Congress(I) boycotted the andly and decided, instead, to take the to court. Under the Anti-Defection dequalification can be averted if oneof the legislators of a party defect. Seven defectors—the Congress(I) MIAS—the Barbosa-led group mvented the clause.

hesudden political developments left Coans incredulous. Politics in Goa

law was no hindrance to the ambitions of the mercurial B.B. Lyngdoh. Ironically, he himself had helped Purno A. Sangma form a ministry on February 6, 1988 by splitting the Hill People's Union (HPU) when he and five others crossed over to help the 22-MLA-strong Congress(I) form a government. The United Meghalaya Parliamentary Forum ministry was also supported by four other regional groups and five independents.

After such deft manoeuvres, the chief ministership was the obvious next step for Lyngdoh. He was waiting for the right moment to strike and the change of government at the Centre gave him the chance. Lyngdoh moved swiftly after Sangma had turned down a suggestion to make way for other aspirants to be chief ministers by rotation until the term of the ministry expired in 1993.

Lyngdoh first resigned as chairman of the state planning board, then formed the Meghalava United Parliamentary Party and gave notice for a no-confidence motion against the Sangma ministry. And soon enough, six Congress(I) ministers including three cabinet ministers, quit a day before the motion was to be taken up.

cent, the highest in the country. But corruption blurred such achievements and Lyngdoh struck.

In Meghalaya, splits within regional parties are a common phenomenon. The largest regional party, the HPU headed by Lyngodh, has been split four times since February 1988 and other regional parties have split at least once since then.

The fall of the Goa and Meghalaya ministries bodes ill for the Congress(I). On the other hand, the party is getting a taste of its own medicine-it was Rajesh Pilot who had organised the defections to help form the Sangma ministry 25 months back.

The defections in the two small states of Goa and Meghalaya could give ideas to Congress(I) legislators in more crucial states as well. With the once all-powerful party high command not even able to raise an admonishing finger, and regional satraps getting frustrated, the party is showing all signs of crumbling from without, even as it is badly riven from within.

-M. RAHMAN and FARZAND AHMED

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Taxing Fracas

Furore over tax summons

HEN Vishy Bandhu Gupta, deputy director of income tax (exemptions), special circle, put his seal on the notice and four summons to luminaries of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP)—which has close links with the BJP-asking them to appear before the tax authorities, little did he realise he was stirring a hornets' nest.

Following the March 7 summonswhich asked the VHP to furnish its income tax returns for 1989-90

and provide detailed accounts for 1988-89-the BJPsupported National Front Government swung into action. Within 24 hours, the notice and summons were quashed. In a press note, the director, special circle (exemptions), Tejinder Singh, claimed the notice was not in "accordance with law" and that the "vHP had been filing return of income regularly".

In the Rajya Sabha, Fi-Minister Madhu Dandavate stated that the notice had been issued under Section 139(2) of the Income Tax Act which had been repealed. He added that the official who'd issued the notice had been transferred to Tamil Nadu. Dandavate, however, failed to answer some disturbing questions:

▶ Why were four summons, issued under existing Section 131 of the Act, to VHP office-bearers Ashok Singhal, V.H. Dalmia, Mahant Param-

hans and Mahant Nrit Gopal Das quashed? Summons under Section 131 can only be invalidated by a court or if the affected party appeals to the director, income tax (exemptions). In case of an appeal, the assessing officer's explanation is sought. But neither did the VHP appeal, nor was Gupta asked to explain.

► The summons had sought details of the VHP's accounts for the year 1988-89—based on information provided by the VHP itself. In 1988-89, the VHP had shown an income of Rs 22,64,495, an expenditure of Rs 34.67,111 and a corpus fund of Rs 80,003. An additional expenditure of Rs 12 lakh had not been

accounted for, the summons stated.

The over-zealousness with which the Finance Ministry quashed the summons casts suspicion on the Government's intentions. The Government denies giving preferential treatment to the VHP. It is, however, reliably learnt that the VHP heard about the summons being served even before it received them. Senior vhr functionaries are believed to have called up V.P. Singh who, in turn, spoke to Dandavate. VHP General Secretary Ashok Singhal vehemently refutes such charges: "Dandavate is an atheist. Why should he favour us? We are prepared to answer any query."

There are, nevertheless, indications that the Government acted post-haste.

compulsions. Says he: "Certain laid. down rules have to be followed. The officer had served the notice illegally. Retorts Gupta, who is in charge of 74 Chandraswami's including Vishwa Dharma Yatan and Dhirendra Brahmachari's Vishwayatan Ashram; "As deputy director (exemptions). I have the power to serve the summons. Only a few days prior to this I served similar summons, under the same section, to Chandraswami. There was no talk of rules and procedures then." To Dalmia's allegation that he is a Congress(I) agent. Gupta counters: "Even as a student, I wasn't a member of any political party." Income tax officials are reading mes-

sages into the Government's actions. An

impression has been created that the VHP can't be touched. Says a senior officer: "The VHP has a battery of lawvers available to them. There was no need for the Finance Ministry to play lawyer, Invalid notices have annulment clauses built into them."

There is another aspect to the case: the VHP's application seeking tax exemption because it is engaged in charitable activities is pending with the Income Tax Department. Till the financial year ending March 1986, the VHP enjoyed this status. In 1987, the Law Ministry noted that religious organisation could be deemed a charitable trust-yet vhp was exempted. Now, says a Central Board of Direct Taxes spokesman: "The vHP's application is being reviewed." Herein lies the catch. If the Finance Ministry now grants the VHP the status of a charitable organisation, it will be overruling the Law Ministry's opinion which is supposed to

be binding on the Income Tax Department. If the vHP is not granted such a status, a question arises as to whether the Income Tax Department will issue summons to the vhp. An official press note says that "during the scrutiny of returns, if any information is to be called for, fresh notices will be issued....

The Government, however, clearly finds itself in a quandary. Private individuals and public organisations have threatened to file a public litigation case against Gupta's transfer and the quash ing of summons. And if that happens, it should keep the vHP's pot of controversy —HARINDER BAWEJA



"A few days ago I served similar summons to Chandraswami. There was no talk of rules then."

VISHV BANDHU GUPTA

As the pressure mounted on March 8which was also the day of the VHP demonstration outside Singh's residence to seek a solution to the Ram Janmabhoomi crisis-the Income Tax Department issued a note quashing the notice and the summons. Later, the 9.30 p.m. news bulletin on Doordarshan carried a report on the case as a 'flash'something done only under extraordinary circumstances. Also, on the same day, an income tax inspector went to Gupta's residence to collect his office cupboard's keys.

Dandavate denies the Finance Ministry move was prompted by political CC-0. In Public Domain. Gurukul Kangri Collection, Haridwar

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ER BAWEJA

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THE hopes generated by the National Front Government's early initiatives on Punjab have been shattered by the crackle of gun-fire. Against a monthly aver-

1100 to 120 deaths, in the first three March alone 146 persons fell to mist bullets. And, though the contensissue of holding assembly elections resolved in favour of continuing silent's Rule, the dangerous drift inued.

The onus for allowing the situation to giorate rests with the Centre. It has lost ever advantage it had intially gained sorting to dilatory tactics, reminiscent he previous Congress(I) regime. The mment has busied itself making senatal gestures—V.P. Singh's dramatic ride through Amritsar; the all-party and many an emotive speech. Says sharma, вјр general secretary: "Goodmeasures and soft options haven't id a positive response."

Typically, compounding matters are

Akalis. While key poal players at the nael level—the CPI(M), Congress(I) and the -managed to rally and to the view that time was not condutohold assembly polls Punjab, the various a factions kept airing ing views on the is-The Akali Dal(L) reaed against holding ambly polls; the Akali (Badal) leaders sup-^{lad polls} in public but in private. Only the Dal (Mann), the

Potent of the various Akali parties, theartedly hankered for them. for the Centre, after initial dither-

decided the situation was not cive to holding free and fair elecbut in case it goes ahead with the to hold elections to the general of the Shiromani Gurdwara Pra-Committee, the moral grounds the holding state elections will be oned. Moreover, by not calling for

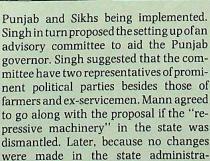


elections, the Government has run the risk of alienating the Mann group and its allies, the Damdami Taksal and the AISSF (Manjit faction). Says S.S. Mann: "In case the Sikhs are denied their constitutional rights, we will be forced to redefine our political goal."

Mann is clearly not an easy person to negotiate with. For instance, when he met V.P. Singh last month, he insisted on the constitutional provisions relating to

Mukarji (left); and Mann: directionless





Victims of Abohar killings being mourned

tion, Mann reneged, saying he could not be a collaborator in the existing system.

With Mann so recalcitrant, it caused little surprise when unity talks between his and the Badal group failed last month. While Mann won't budge from his stand on most issues (he refuses to be swornin as an MP unless allowed to enter Parliament with his kirpan), Prakash Singh Badal has been busy politicking. He's had many meetings with Deputy

Prime Minister Devi Lal and shared the public stage with Janata Dal, BJP and cri leaders more than once; and his party attended the state level allparty meeting called by Governor Nirmal Mukarji at Chandigarh.

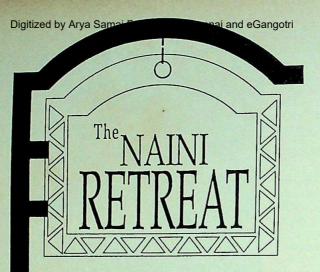
Meantime, with Mann threatening to avenge the killings by the police by holding Nuremberg-type trials, and the Government giving little thrust to policing, the security forces are considerably demoralised. As a senior

police officer said: "The uncertainty about the future administrative set-up has paralysed officials at the functional level.'

And though the Government has cleared the confusion about the continuance of President's Rule, a coherent policy. on both the political and administrative fronts, needs to be spelt out. So that the administrative inertia is shaken off, and the political forces in the state crystallise in clear-cut moulds. -KANWAR SANDHU



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Pawar's Ploy

Shiv Sena upstaged



A 'planned miracle' (gadun alela chamatkar) had been promised by Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray, who'd predicted that the newly-elected Congress(I)

sate Government would collapse on the reryfirst day of the assembly session. But was Chief Minister Sharad Pawar who rrentually pulled it off when he managed to garner 170 votes for Madhukartopple the Government, at least 47 Congress(I) MLAs would have had to defect, no easy task considering Pawar's considerable political skills.

The Indian Express group even linked Thackeray with Dhirubhai Ambani and Amitabh Bachchan in the "Pawar-ouster" plan. This triggered off a battle between two Marathi papers—Thackeray's Sanna and the Express group's Loksatta edited by Madhav Gadkari. Gadkari alleged the plan was to persuade at least 25 MLAs to resign, and for this purpose, Rs 25 crore was available. Thackeray hit back, comparing Gadkari to "a burdened ass kicking at Pawar's opponents".

But Pawar's camp had the last laugh. And later, Pawar set the cat

ss av

ORISSA

Iron Hand

Biju Patnaik asserts himself

BACK at the helm after 28 long years, Biju Patnaik is out to drive home a point: that he is Orissa's unchallenged *Tau*. And he is saying so in so many words.

Queried by newspersons about the delay in ministry-formation, Patnaik shot back: "Am I not enough?" Though he did take in 15 ministers nine days later, the protracted wait underscored the fact that only he mattered.

The seasoned legislators, who did not find a place in the ministry, included Bhagabat Behera, Biswabhusan Harichandan, Harish Buxipatro, Damodar Rout, Sarat Kar, Anang Uday Singh Deo and Ashok Das. While it is likely that some of them may be accommodated at a later date, Patnaik's message is clear: he is the sole arbiter of his partymen's fate.

Expectedly, the veterans are smarting under the insult. Recently, state party Secretary-General Sarat Kar vented his anger at a public speech at Dhenkanal. Said Kar: "Patnaik is incapable of delivering the goods." Interestingly, Kar, like the rest, lacks the courage to confront Patnaik and is believed to have denied making the statement. No wonder that Patnaik is unmoved by the rumblings of dissent.

While Patnaik has retained the major portfolios—home, general administration, industries, mining and geology,

Patnaik in office: firm





Sena MLAs enter the Assembly; (inset) Pawar

Tao Chaudhary, the Congress(I) candidate for the Speaker's post, against the 116 votes the opposition nominee fetched.

Thackeray was outwitted at his own game. What added to his humiliation was the fact that the Congress(I)—with just 141 seats in the 289-member House—walked away with at least 16 position votes in the secret ballot.

Earlier that day, the 52 Sena MLAs along with the 42 MLAs of their alliance partner, the BJP, had made a spectacular intry into the Assembly. Dressed in ream kurta-pyjamas and large saffron burbans they raised medieval cries and polaimed their pridate hair at Modaline the partner that the safety at Modaline their pridate hair at Modaline the pridate hair at Modaline the pridate hair at Modaline the partner that the safety at Modaline the partner that the safety at Modaline the partner than the partner that the partner that the partner than the par

The assembly session had begun iterdays of intense speculation about the fate of Pawar's ministry. Rumours that a senior Congress(I) ministry had agreed to help Thackeray bring the state Government. But to

among the pigeons when he suggested that some of the support had come from Shiv Sena MLAs. "They cannot be identified—they are afraid of the possible violent consequences," he added.

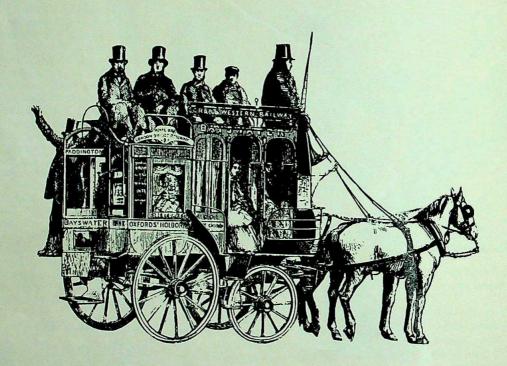
One consequence of the Speaker's election was the anxiety about cross-voting in the opposition camp. Result: the Opposition decided to avoid a contest for the Rajya Sabha members from the state, allowing the Congress(I) to get all its four candidates re-elected.

Even the subsequent defeat of an amendment bill on the Zilla Parishad Act proved poor comfort for the Opposition. For the bill was defeated by a mere three votes due to insufficient attendance by Congress(I) MLAs.

This demonstrated the need for the ruling party to cut down on absenteeism. For the Sena the message was: Pawar's subtle manoeuvres had clearly proved more effective than Thackeray's huffing and puffing.

—M. RAHMAN

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planning and coordination-a few handpicked freshers have been handed out plum assignments. Yudhistir Das, a new entrant to the Assembly, was chosen to be the Speaker. Narsingh Mishra. till recently a member of the CPI, was made law minister with cabinet rank.

The chief minister's individualistic streak was reflected in other decisions too. For instance. Patnaik announced suo moto his government's decision to implement the Rs 2 a kg rice scheme. Another announcement to hike minimum wages from Rs 11 to Rs 25 took even his labour minister by surprise. Pointed out a Janata Dal legislator: "It is a presidential form of government."

Despite his advanced years and failing health. Patnaik has got down to business in earnest. One of his first pronouncements was to caution his ministers to lead a spartan life and not to follow the example of their predecessors. "No more foundation-stone laying ceremonies," warned he wryly.

With his ministers on a tight leash, Patnaik gave a piece of his mind to bureaucrats in the state. His impatience with the administration-mired in corruption and inefficiency-was evident. At a meeting with top officials, the chief minister described them as "corrupt and stale". The managing director of Orissa Mining Corporation, N.C. Das, was forced to resign. The chairmen of four state corporations were abruptly changed while R.N. Das, the high-profile additional chief secretary identified as J.B. Patnaik's man, was sidelined. The chief secretary has been ordered to suggest means to remodel the structure of the administration. Efforts are also on to usher in a greater degree of accountability.

And Patnaik has taken the lead in setting the tone of the new administration. He has refused police security and moves around without a pilot car. His ministers are expected to follow his style. Numerous restrictions have been imposed on bureaucrats. To take out a car, even on official work, senior officials are required to make log book entries.

In addition, the chief minister has issued express orders to follow up election pledges: he has announced a waiver of loans up to Rs 10,000 for farmers; entrusted a special team with the task of giving shape to the promised second steel plant; and set up a crack force to bring the corrupt to book.

Clearly. Patnaik is a man in a hurry. And the attempt is not just to leave his mark on the state, but to free the state from J.B. Patnaik's tainted legacy.

-RUBEN BANERJEE

UTTAR PRADESH

Speaker's Spite

Remarks anger Congressmen



HE has made history of sorts-of dubious sorts. The new Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Sabha Speaker, Hari Krishna Srivastava, is the first Speaker to direct one set of legis-

lators to fight the other; to have his removal demanded at the very onset of his tenure; and to have the chief minister issue a public apology on his behalf.

The fracas occurred on the last day of the second session of the House. Some Congress(I) members raised a demand for adjournment of the House following the death of Vidhan Parishad chairman lagdish Chandra Dixit, a senior Con-

aside the marshal and the Vidhan Sabha guards ringing him, saying angrily. "Don't bother. Now MLAs will set the MLAs right." Immediately, some Janata Dal legislators rushed to his rescue. Srivastava told them: "You have shown them their place in the field (elections). now set them right here too." As a scuffle ensued, he went on to exhort: "Maaro saalon ko'' (beat up the rascals). And he trumpeted: "I am no less a goondg (hooligan)." Amid the pandemonium, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Beni Prasad Verma presented the vote-onaccount which was passed. The Speaker then adjourned the House sine die.

Srivastava later sought to justify himself to journalists. Charging Congress(I) members with a strategy to prevent passage of supplementary demands, he said: "They resorted to gross indiscipline. I am not going to allow this at any cost. I asked my party members to intervene, as every member is supposed



Srivastava: unbecoming conduct

gress(I) leader. Srivastava refused to concede their demand, saying there was no official communication on his death. The House was, however, adjourned for an hour.

When the House reassembled, the Congress(I) members again pressed for an adjournment. But the Speaker stuck to his earlier stand, and despite the din, continued with the agenda to pass the crucial vote-on-account for four months. The infuriated members rushed to the well of the House, threatening to disrupt the transaction of business.

When some of them approached the Speaker's podium, Srivastava waved

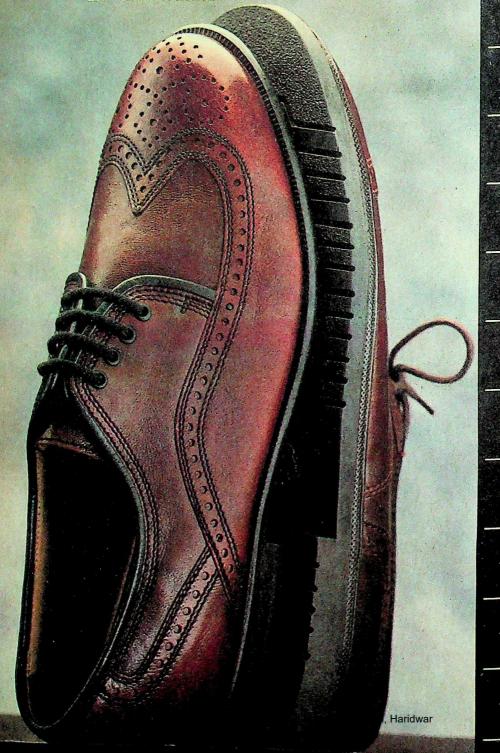
to maintain the dignity of the House and help in restoring order."

But even the press briefing, which had been convened by the Speaker himself, failed to pass off without mishap. Riled by an uncomfortable question, Srivastava lost his cool. Pointing to a correspondent, he said: "Main tumhein kaan pakar kar baahar nikalwa dunga" (I will get you thrown out). Not surprisingly, the press conference ended abruptly.

The situation has now taken a piquant turn. On the one hand Srivastava faces the wrath of opposition members. on the other, agitated newsmen have sought a public apology for his misbehaviour with them, failing which they will boycott the proceedings of the



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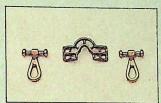
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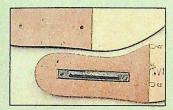
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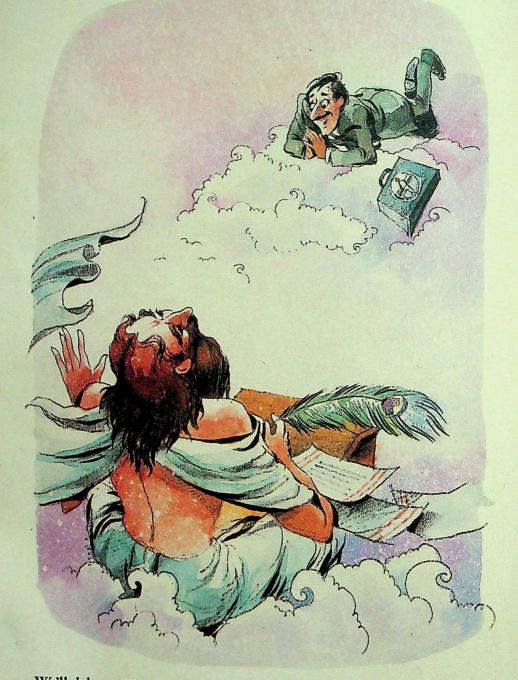
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House. Denouncing Srivastava for his House apparliamentary behaviour, leader of he Opposition N.D. Tiwari said: "I have ostconfidence in the Speaker. He should asign immediately." Thirty Congress(I) MLAs have submitted a memorandum Governor S.N. Reddy, demanding Srivastava's immediate removal from the Speaker's post.

Chief Minister Mulayam Singh yadav, who received a memorandum from the press correspondents, offered to apologise on behalf of the Speaker. Said Yadav: "I apologise on his behalf and assure you this will never happen again."The newsmen, however, refused their decision unless the Speaker made amends himself.

Worsening matters was the Speaker's clarification to a local Hindi daily which quoted him as saying: "Forget and forgive." Elaborating, Srivastava stated that he had taken a stand against "certain black sheep" among the news-men, who were working at the Congress(I)'s behest to malign him. The statement provoked a meeting of the Press Correspondent Committee's general body to announce a state-level agitation against Srivastava.

On the political front, the Congress(I) is already busy making the Speaker's behaviour the issue for a state-wide agitation. Effigies of the Speaker were burnt by Congressmen in Allahabad and Pratapgarh on March 13 and 16. Says former Congress(I) minister Pramod Tiwari: "If he does not resign on his own, the Janata Dal Government should force him to do so. If the Government keeps quiet, we will be on the streets fighting the battle for democratic norms and parliamentary traditions." Adds another former Congress(I) minister Arun Kumar Singh: "We will not let the House function till the Speaker is removed."

If the Congress(I)—represented by members in the 425-member House—carries out its threat, trouble les ahead for Srivastava. Known to be close to the chief minister, Srivastava lacks the support of Yadav's detraclors—mainly the former Lok Dal(A) group which has a strength of 65 in the lanata Dal group of 209. The BJP, which has condemned the incident in the House, has so far not supported the demand for Srivastava's removal. How-

ever, it is also likely to take a tough stand. With every passing day, the issue is Snowballing into a major public contro-Versy. But regardless of whether Srivaslava goes or stays, a serious question has been raised about the dignity of the highest chair in the state Assembly.

-DILIP AWASTHI

ANDHRA PRADESH

Watery Woes

Salvage operations begin



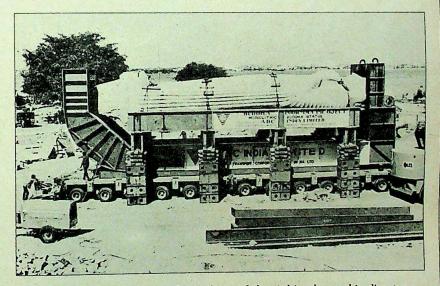
THE disaster was as big as the Buddha. As the carrying barge 15.17-metre-tall statue-the tallest monolith in the world-listed in Hyderabad's Hus-

sainsagar Lake last month, the splash created ripples nation-wide. A brainchild of former Andhra Pradesh chief minister N.T. Rama Rao, the costly Buddha (project cost: Rs 5.58 crore) had literally become the sinking Buddha.

Aside from the fact that considerable money had been sunk into the project, what added a tragic dimension to the disaster was the drowning of eight persons in the mishap. Immediately, a postmortem into the accident began and the first diagnosis placed the blame squarely on ABC India, the company which had been awarded the contract to ferry the statue to the Rock of Gibraltar in the centre of the lake and install it on a pedestal there. Rama Rao had been inspired to have the 15.17-metre-tall Buddha built and installed on a 7.24metre-high pedestal-together rising to the height of a five-storey building-on the rock in the centre of the lake after he saw the Statue of Liberty.

Accounts of those on the barge who survived the disaster suggest that ABC India was underprepared for the demanding job. That the preparations for the Buddha's final journey were grossly inadequate can be seen from the fact that the barge began to list the moment the statue was loaded on it. Hardly had 75 metres of a 1,000-odd metre journey been covered at daybreak on March 10. that the statue embedded in a steel frame—together weighing an incredible 410 tonnes—slid off the trailer carrying it on the barge and sank.

"A trial run with sandbags for the load on the barge went off beautifully, claimed M.K. Agarwal, a director of ABC India. What the company apparently missed out in the trial run was a full analysis of how the payload of 510

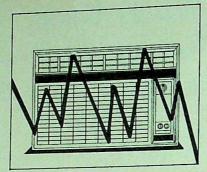


(Above) Buddha statue on the trailer; and the sinking barge: big disaster



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53



Voltage fluctuations can destroy a new airconditioner in just one summer

Is there a way out?

Sharp drops and highs in voltage can harm an ordinary compressor. which can't keep up with the

Several months of such fluctuations are known to actually 'kill' a compressor-even a new one. And as you know, the compressor is the heart of an airconditioner

However, voltage fluctuations are a part of our lives. So what do you do?

Using a voltage stabilizer helps but it is not enough. You need your airconditioner to be fitted with a compressor that gives you protection where a stabilizer leaves off

The Kirloskar compressor handles fluctuations—and extreme heat

This compressor has an exceptionally wide operating range of 180 volts to 260 volts. Other compressors operate within a narrower range-and even then, "at the rated temperature". If you look at the small print, you will notice that this

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The Kirloskar compressor also has a built-in overload protector which shuts off the compressor automatically during periods of severe voltage

A third protective feature special to the Kirloskar compressor is an internal pressure relief valve. If there is any undue increase in pressure on the compressor, this valve automatically goes into action—and the pressure is taken off your AC

Only an airconditioner fitted with a Kirloskar compressor offers you this terrific trio of safety features.

For Indian operating conditions

This is because this compressor has been built with the country's unique conditions in mind-not just the erratic power supply, but the heat and dust as well Besides it's energy-efficient

And the Kirloskar compressor is quiet. None of that rude, annoying drone that other compressors can't

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onnes—statue: 320 tonnes; its frame: 9000nnes; and the trailer: 100 tonnes ould be transferred to the floating barge without disturbing its balance. The cruel iony was that ABC India project chief sk. Moondhra was the only victim of the mishap whose body was not found. Predictably, government officials in

charge of the project placed the onus quarely on ABC India. Said an official overseeing the project: "They were not obliged to answer any questions or dirulge details of how they were taking it but only to give us a broad picture.

This was also one of those rare instances when government agencies proved more efficient than a private company. For all other aspects of the mammoth project, which began about five years ago, had been overseen by government engineers: first the statue washewn at a quarry near Raigir, about

50 km from the city; then roads and bridges were strengthened to transport it to Hyderabad; and finally a platform built on the Rock in the middle of the lake. In fact, though the statue cost only Rs 80 lakh, transportation and installation charges pushed up the tab sixfold.

Only the final task of ferrying the statue and installing it on the pedestal was given to a private company. ABC India bagged the contract for Rs 170.8 lakh, just Rs 20,000 less than the figure quoted by the other bidder, Urmila and Company. But Urmila and Company had agreed to take up the project only if the Government built a kilometre-long causeway to the middle of the lake. In retrospect, the construction of a causeway-like the one on the sea linking Bombay to Haji Ali-would have averted the tragedy.

But the final verdict on this will only

be pronounced by P.A. Choudary, a retired high court judge, who has been appointed by Chief Minister M. Chenna Reddy to investigate the mishap and find out whether the awarding of the contract to ABC India was above board.

Meanwhile, the state Government plans to attempt a salvage operation to retrieve the statue from its watery bed. though experts are still not clear about the extent of the damage to it. Said Irrigation Secretary K. Madhava Rao who has been put in charge of the salvage operations: "ABC India is bound to pay all expenses for salvaging the statue and the Government has only to take care of planning the logistics.'

The gigantic Buddha may not yet have ended up in a watery grave. But the statue's accidental immersion augurs to be a long-lasting and traumatic one.

-AMARNATH K. MENON

M. CHENNA REDDY

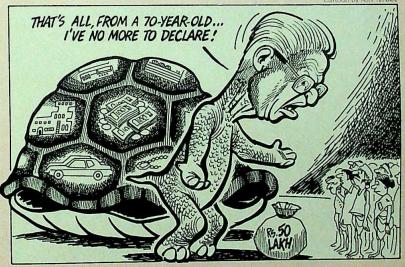
Farcical Move

T was a supposedly well-intentioned move, but it may just boo-Imerang on Chief Minister M. Chenna Reddy and his 17 cabinet colleagues. Last month when Governor Krishan Kant announced the appointment of Andhra Pradesh High Court Judge Seetharam Reddy as the new state Lok Ayukta, Chenna Reddy's Government wasted no time in simultaneously releasing a list of the assets and liabilities of all its cabinet members.

The list turned out to be a cartoonist's delight. Despite the jokes, Chenna Reddy's move was deadly serious. For one, he had shrewdly timed it with the Lok Ayukta's appointment. For another by releasing the list publicly, he had scored over his predecessor N.T. Rama Rao, who had promised something similar but had

never got around to carrying it out. But the list obviously concealed a lot more than it revealed. For painting a contradictory picture were the lifestyles of some of the ministers. Chenna Reddy's assets on paper were put at less than Rs 50 lakh, whereas the very building the chief minister stays inof which he claims to own a third Part—is a multi-storey edifice with an elevator going up to three floors. Says a Congress(I) dissident: "It is the only Privatehouse in Andhra Pradesh with alift." The flamboyance is also evident

PRALIBITA 90-005



in the marble flooring, larger than life portraits, intercom system and airconditioned bedrooms at the house.

Similarly, arrack-baron-turned-Endowments Minister M. Ravindranath Choudhary has conveniently forgotten to mention his newly-built black granite mansion in Jubilee Hills into which he moved only last fortnight. Also hard to swallow was the fact that Health Minister N. Srinivasulu Reddy did not have a bank account to his name nor any moveable assets. Perhaps the hardest to buy are some declarations which do not show any source of income at all.

But the list made at least one significant revelation: many ministers, who hadn't moved into government accommodation, were living in their own houses that were not registered in their name. This entitled them to pick up Rs 5,000 from the exchequer as rent.

Said a civil servant: "A politician must be clean and not just appear to be clean. And Chenna Reddy cannot convince the people on that score."

Clearly, the chief minister's efforts to come out clean have instead of embossing his reputation, only served to make him the butt of ridicule. For a second time around, the revelations have become a farce.

And with the controversy on Housing Minister Koneru Ranga Rao's resignation over charges of corruption just about behind it, the last thing the Government needs at the moment is another scandal on its hands.

-AMARNATH K. MENON

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Q. What are the returns on the investment?

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Sudden Dissent

State BJP faces a revolt



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> WHILE the BJP may have much to rejoice about elsewhere in the country, in Bihar it is faced with an embarrassing revolt that could split the party's

state unit. Triggering off the crisis was the suspension of the state president Inder Singh Namdhari and his supporter, trade union leader, Samaresh Singh, for anti-party activities.

The move stunned many as Namdharihad the backing of as many as 23 of the BJP's 39 MLAs. Many believe that the relatively liberal Namdhari-who happens to be a Sikh-was suspended because the RSS hardliners in the BJP were opposed to his becoming leader of the legislature party.

That Namdhari was being eased out became evident a week before he was



suspended from the primary membership of the BJP—when he submitted his resignation as state president and then announced at a press conference that he had been asked to do so by the high command.

Six days later, he was told that the acting presi-



Oraon after election; and (left) Namdhari

dent of the state unit Tarakant Jha and National Secretary Kailashpati Mishra would nominate the leader of the legislature party at a meeting. But Namdhari refused to cooperate.

MADHYA PRADESH

Crime Pays

T was the most unusual mode of transport ever selected by an MLA to reach the Vidhan Sabha to take the oath-riding atop an elephant followed by a procession of vehicles, another caparisoned elephant, folk dancers and nautch-girls.

But for Ashok Vir Vikram Singh, alias Bhaiya Raja, 40, who won as an independent from Pawai in Panna district of Madhya Pradesh, the gimmick symbolised both his lifestyle and philosophy. For he has a reputation for always riding roughshod over opponents and established laws.

He contested the poll from Nainital Jail, where he was lodged in connection with a murder at the farmhouse of the Congress(I)'s Akbar "Dumpy" Ahmed. "The terror of Bundelkhand" was brought to Panna by the Uttar Pradesh Police for a day to file his

nomination. He was granted bail only after he was elected.

At last count the 6 ft 2 inch Bhaiya Raja

The elephant procession; and (inset) Bhaiya Raja

had 32 cases against him for offences including murder and rape. However, most of the cases have ended in his acquittal either due to "lack of evidence" or due to witnesses turning hostile in courts. Stories of him forcing women into submission with the help of pet pythons and corpses being fed to crocodiles are part of folklore.

"Ashok Vir Vikram Singh's reign of terror has a history of 21 years and his exploits are unlimited," says a police report. He first made his pile by cornering government contracts.

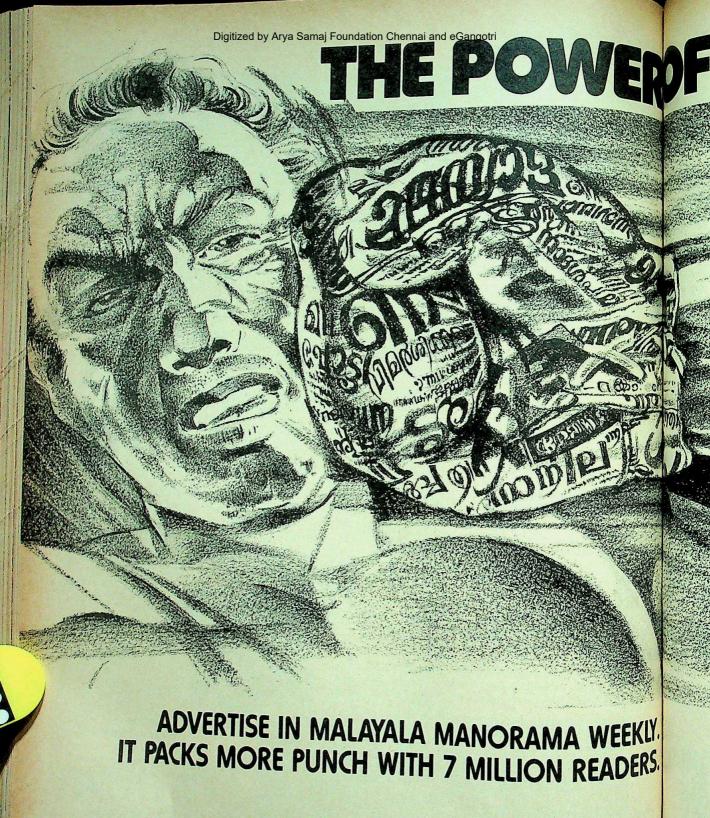
In the 1985 assembly polls he was defeated by the then home minister, Jaipal

Singh. But his campaign slogan is remembered: "Mohar lagegi haathi par, nahi to goli chhati par, laash milegi ghati par"(Stamp on the elephant symbol or your chest will be ridden with bullets, your body found in the ravines). Bhaiya Raja still stands by his philosophy of the bullet. He told a public meeting recently: "MLAs should be goondas nowadays. Who cares for simple persons?'

-N.K. SINGH



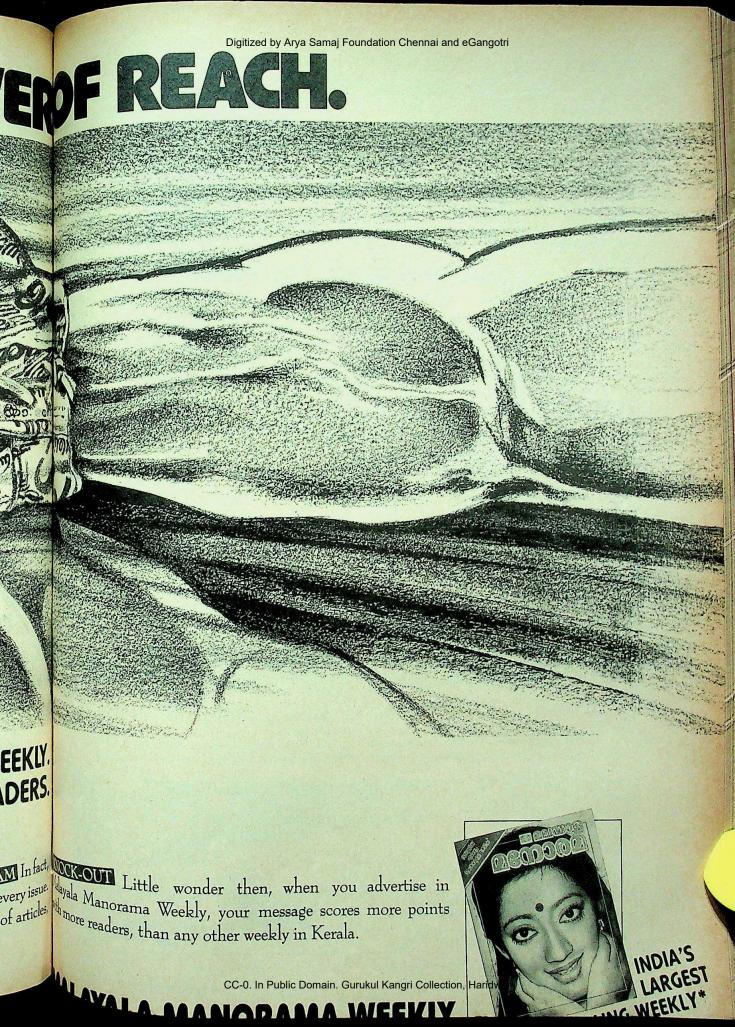
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more than half the Malayalee adult population make it a point to read every issue and short stories packs more punch and credibility.

WHAM Malayala Manorama Weekly in Kerala. BHAM In fact, OK-OI more than half the Malayalee adult population make it a point to read every issue avala Manorama Weekly's editorial mix of articles are received and short stories packs more punch and credibility.

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Result: within two hours he was told that he had been suspended from the primary membership of the BJP.

This move precipitated a crisis as 22 of the 39 BJP legislators refused to attend the meeting. Instead, they shot off a letter to the BJP President L.K. Advani demanding withdrawal of the suspension. The next day a face saving formula was hammered out. The hardliners agreed that whosoever was the choice of the rebel MLAs, barring Namdhari and Samaresh Singh, would be acceptable to them as the leader.

The rebels held a parallel meeting and elected Lalit Oraon, a tribal. By ensuring that one of his supporters bagged the post, Namdhari has clearly won round one. His loyalists have now decided to keep a low profile and wait for the party high command to "correct the mistake" of suspending Namdhari.

But if the hardliners led by Kailashpati Mishra are to be believed, that appears unlikely. They are, in fact, persisting with their efforts to get Namdhari and Samaresh Singh expelled. Says one:

"Our President Advaniji would prefer to close down the state unit or have the party split here rather than succumb to pressure."

A split in the state unit, in fact, appears a distinct possibility. A clear sign that even the BJP's legendary cohesiveness is beginning to show chinks. Andin case of such an eventuality, it is bound to send ripples across the whole of the north especially in the states where the BIP is in power.

-UTTAM SENGUPTA

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

THE Second Battle of Patli Putar erupted last fortnight in mayhem and destruction and promises to be

even bloodier than the first.

The provocation was provided by Prince Chau and King Tau, rulers of the Jat kingdom of Haryana. Actually it was Chau rather than Tau who triggered off the battle by capturing some booths set up illegally in the kingdom by his rival for the throne, Prince Ajit-ated. Here's how the battlefield scenario developed.

Tau: Puttar, why are you so ajitated?

Chau: There is a conspiracy against us. They want your head so they are demanding mine, all because I captured a few illegal booths.

Tau: Who in this land dares challenge my unquestioned authority?

Chau: Ajit-ationists, in league with our enemies.

Tau: Which enemies? Tell me their names and I will make tau bhaji out of them.

Chau: Those barons who are jealous of our popularity. Baron Ambani, Baron Goenka, Baron Birla...

Tau: They are only paper tigers. They can do no harm. Call out the Green Brigade. We will crush them like ganna. Chau: They are not the only ones.

Tau: Give me the names. This is a capitalist plot. They want to take over my capital.

Chau: The leader is Prince Ajit-ated but he has convinced the council of ministers to back him. There are also these war correspondents who are part of the plot. I had to break a few heads to get the rest to fall in line.

Tau: Good. Let them know that Chau and Tau do not run away from the battlefield. We make others run away. They are jealous because I want to fill all the top composts in the kingdom with soils of the son... I mean sons of the soil.

Patli Putar

Chau: One of your sons. Prince Ranjit, has gone over to the enemy camp.

Tau: Don't worry. I

have appointed you my heir. I don't have that many left. Chau (rubbing his head): Neither do I. But let's not split heirs. We have to find a strategy.

Tau: You're right. This is the battle of Patli Putar. We have our honour to defend. I have built my kingdom on the policy of divide and rule. We will use the same tactics.

Chau: But your divide and rule policy meant half of the kingdom for me and the other half for you. How can that help us in this battle?

Tau: Puttar, you are still young, like unripened bhutta. Just follow in my footsteps and you will learn the tao of politics. There is an old Jat saying. The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Now do you follow?

Chau: I can follow your footsteps alright. We have so many enemies now. Which ones are you talking about?

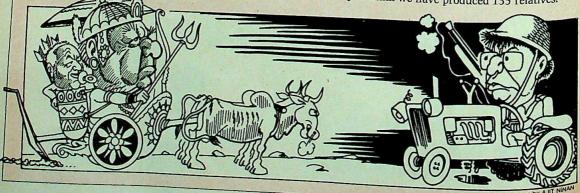
Tau: There is Prince Rajiv. He still has ambitions of being restored to the throne of Delhi. There is that crafty fox Chandra Shaker. He has his eye on the throne as well. If I declare war on Prince Ajit-ated and sack his holdings, they will join us as long as we promise them something in return.

Chau: What can we promise them?

Tau: I have built up a kingdom on the art of promising everything to everybody. I will promise them the second highest position in the kingdom. They think I will soon be too old to carry on so they can take over.

Chau: But they might just do that. What happens after you are gone?

Tau: Puttar, there is still green behind your ears of corn. Why do you think we have produced 135 relatives?



Cartoon by A

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The Esplanade. A name that evokes meetings, tête-à-lête and rendezvous, to a calcuttan.

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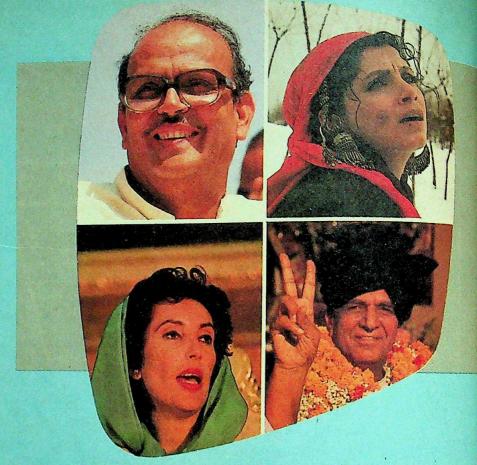
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Sesa has a new iron in the fire. Pig iron.

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pig iron has always been a problem in India. And consequently, the import bill has always been high.

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This is the durable and growing partnership that is fuelling Sesa Goa's growth thrust into new areas of enterprise, quality and technology.

And for the Sesa Group, it is another step forward in its dynamic diversification in search of greater excellence. After all, with such formidable know-how backing it, it seems only natural to have a few irons in the fire.

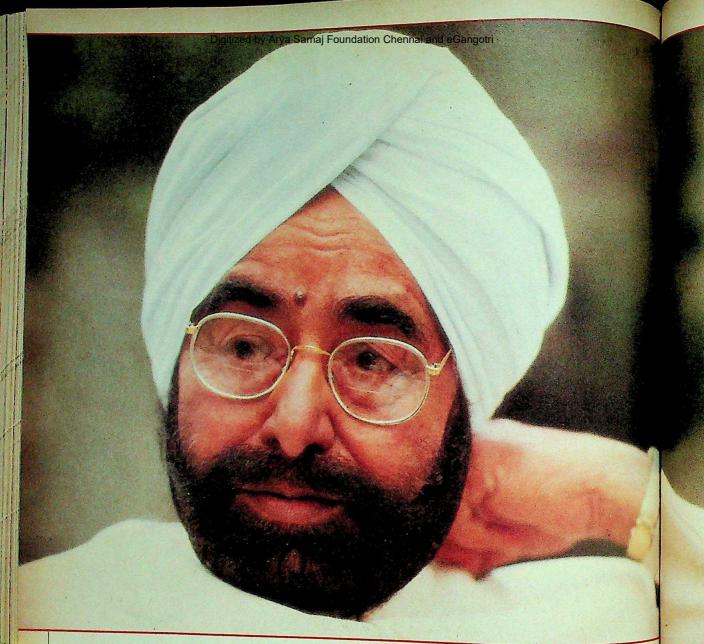
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THE HIGHER WE



ZAIL SINGH

LENGTHENING SHADOWS

BY INDERJIT BADHWAR

Emakes you feel his presence. Maybe it's because of the way he appears to touch you, physically, simply through conversation. Maybe it's because he demands total eye contact while listening or answering. Giani Zail Singh is still pontifical. But his is the pedantry not of a pundit, but the anecdotal ruminations of a sadder but ever wiser village elder chiding mortals for the fools that they be.

In that sense, there is no retirement for the former President. There can be no retirement from memories. The eyes narrow, drooping at the corners, in a heavy-lidded scan of the past. He is 27 years old. No. Wait. I think I was 20 then. yes because my moustache and beard had just begun to sprout Bhagat Singh has just been hanged. Zail Singh is being initiated into the underground anti-British movement by three ladsing village near Faridkot.

They light a candle. He dips his wrist in the flame. The flesh blackens and sears. It is a terrifying pain. He wants to scream But he holds it within. The wrist still bears the revolutionary scar. Are there minin. The wrist still bears the revolution of the has fell deep pain and still an area of the has fell deep pain and still area. deep pain and still stifled his anguish? I have seen a lot of pain. It

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never stops. Sometimes my tears never stop. And they roll, ever so gently, even as he speaks, a cracking baritone. Sometimes, just my tears, sometimes just talk.

Punjab has mortally wounded him. Helovedit. He played with it. He thought it loved him back. Now it is like some distant memory. Hindu versus Sikh! I never thought that could ever be a possibility. I was the only chief minister to last more than nine months. It was a record. Five years and three months. And I can say with pride that during that time only two people fell to police bullets. We celebrated the concrete roads, the concrete water ducts. Primary schools in every village. And yes, electric lights were going up everywhere. Ah, 1976! There was so much light. Flying over Punjab at night you could not tell whether it was one big town or a cluster of villages. Everything seems so dark now.

And what do intellectuals and politicians with Ph.Ds know about running governments or solving problems? You have to understand people. You have to be a...a...psychologist. You are a Punjabi aren't you? And what is your culture? Mainly, that you live not by begging or stealing. That you live to be strong. That above all you live for izzat (respect). Sabton gira hoya Punjabi bhi be-izzati bardasht nahin karega. (Even the lowliest of Punjabis will not tolerate any insults.) There were so many leaders. Jawaharlal Nehru. Indira Gandhi. And as God will testify main kissee de saamne kadi hath ni jore na godde teke. (I have never supplicated in front of anyone.) Any government that will not give a Punjabi izzat will not succeed. Nor will anybody who is simply pro-Sikh or pro-Hindu.

But what of the noontime darkness of 1979? Watering the Bhindranwale weed and then watching it metastasise. Zail Singh, too, had played with history and it

sits in judgement over him with no final sentence. The tradictions of the man risen from the soil. The compromises Proud Punjabi steeped in high ambition and the very tis that now so revulses him. In gratitude he had called ay Gandhi his rehanuma. An ingratiating presidential addiate, he would later promise to sweep the floor for Mrs Agrateful President so infuriated with the ingratitude (a) Gandhi, he seemed ready to buck the Constitution and him. Awaiting the sentence of history.

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Sub kuchh badla. Hum badle. Zamana badla. Yeh to kudrat ka lancon hai. (Everything changed. We changed. The world And Such is nature's immutable law.)

And now the eyes look inwards again. But did everything changes m to change? There was a time when people gave love, not ly, Love is stronger than loyalty. Today, that love for who are the whole whole who are the whole who are the whole who are the whole who who are older is vanishing. The younger man today that the winds that the work with the wore with the work with the work with the work with the work with th ands that the older one should respect him, ki voh usko ankare (that the older one should respect min, Markets) of the self states are the older salute the younger). The days of the sely states are gone, as they should, because we achieved the of days of the state democracy. Still, I remember seeing even kings rise when elders entered the durbar and even submit to

Still, he worries. The national movement is only yesterday. Those who were young and part of it never imagined they would overthrow the British in their lifetimes and establish a democracy. Our only thoughts were that we would all probably die. But at least we dared to dream.

ODAY, there is no dream. What was a national movement has, in Zail Singh's eyes, been transformed into the absurd—a political party. Yes, he was a Congressman, and part of the process of the politicisation of a vision. And today, Mahatma Gandhi's advice that Congress should have dissolved itself, stands out for him as an eternal verity. The big netas took advantage of the credibility and respect for the national movement and appropriated it to form a political vessel. There are still leaders all over who think they are bigger than the nation and refuse to sacrifice the interests of the party for the nation. The party, remember, exists for the nation and not the nation for the party. All these so called all party meetings. Everyone's pushing his party rather than the nation.

But there's hope. Ah, Gorbachev! Zail Singh sees him as the biggest man of this century. I told him when he came here, don't give up your path. Reagan may not believe you. But he'll retire soon. You're younger. And unlike Leninism and Stalinism, Gorbachevism will continue. I knew he felt happy at heart but he said he did not wish for any ism to continue. I could not dream in my wildest imagination that such a tidal wave would sweep away communism. The guts of Gorbachev were that he dared to try and touch insanigat (humanism).

And often, the fount of insaniyat is religion. Sikhism? No, all religions. Has he changed as a devout Sikh? Yes, and no. True, I used to think that mine was the only religion that showed the way to salvation. But now I don't think so. You cannot spread just one religion, or try and exterminate any one religion. And you just cannot finish religion.

At the age of 73, he questions everything. The old world was simpler. There were no smugglers. Very little crime. No communal violence even in places like Bhagalpur where Muslims were in a majority. That's gone forever. And the solutions that ushered in a new India? He's forceful and unwavering: the division of India into linguistic states was an unmitigated disaster; the failure to decentralise was another.

In 1975, Zail Singh, an ardent champion of giving even more powers to the Centre, had even proposed an all-India medical service. I was wrong. Too much centralisation destroys the oneness of the country. It is not the way to win the hearts of the people. Look at Uttar Pradesh with 14 crore people. An administrative nightmare. No. India can survive only as a confederation, as a truly federal system, not a showpiece federalism. People say this will dismember India. I say this will keep India together. The world is changing. Why not India?

Now that he is no longer in public life, is he wiser at the expense of others? He makes no claims to saintliness. Or exclusive wisdom. Foolish is the man, he says, who claims to know everything. I thank the Lord everyday that I have not descended to that foolishness. But there is more clarity. And sentimentality. Mawkish, perhaps, but his very own.

At his age, he thinks of death, of his own, sentimentally, of others, like his long-term friend, Gurbax Singh Chahal who died recently, with visible grief. He is aware of his lengthening shadow and expresses his emotion in a couplet: Ujale tumhari yadon ke mere saath rehne do, na jaane kis galee mein zindagi ki sham ho jaye. Please leave with me the illuminations of memory, I know not the crossroads where I will find myself in the evening of my life.

Brewing Millions

Indian financial wizard makes it big in British business

HERE'S at least one Indian in London who's got the British virtually drinking out of his hands. Nazum Virani, 40, once a penniless immigrant, is today Britain's largest independent brewer. Leaning back contentedly in a plush leather chair in his elegantly furnished office in central London, shortly after he sealed the deal for 200 more pubs, he asserts: "I have made it."

That sounds somewhat redundant. For, the chairman and chiefexecutive of Control Securities-among the top 20 British property and leisure companies quoted on the London Stock Exchange-has the reputation of being a financial wizard with a tough, no-nonsense approach. Virani specialises in buying ailing companies and turning them into successful organisations. Sometimes he buys chunks of property from big players-such as British property giant

Mountleigh-retains a proportion, and sells the remainder for a profit through his Asian business contacts.

Control Securities is worth \$425 million (Rs 765 crore)-staggering in comparison to its Rs 23.4 crore market value a few years ago. Virani has accumulated a personal fortune of Rs 253.8 crore to make him the 81st richest individual in the country. He's regularly featured in Financial Times and business circles concede that Virani has laid the foundations of a multi-billion dollar empire. London-based stock brokers Kitcat and Aitken say Virani's company is an excellent long-term investment: "Control's strategy and cautious attitude eliminate much of the risk associated with property trading, while the combination of property investment and successful leisure activities offer much potential."

But the road to the millions has been an arduous one. Unceremoniously booted out of Uganda by Idi Amin in 1972, Virani "arrived as a starving im-



Virani: meteoric rise

migrant. I can only remember hard work, little to eat and poverty". Starting with a small grocery in London's Lordship Lane—he calls it Hardship Lane the shrewd Ismaili gradually diversified into the wholesale commodity trade. He bought a chain of 16 cash-and-carry outlets to supply other Asian shopkeepers. "After a hard day at the grocery, we would deliver goods door-to-door into the night," he recalls.

In 1984, he purchased 29 per cent controlling interest in Belhaven Brewery in Dunbar, Scotland. "It had a market capital of about Rs 18 crore and was a provincial company when we took over," he remembers. When he sold out a few years later for Rs 86.4 crore his profit was a hefty Rs 68.4 crore.

Virani went on to acquire a 49 per cent shareholding, for about Rs 21.6 crore, in Control Securities, an ailing London commercial real estate company. As the firm was losing Rs9 crore

annually at the time, Virani began a major clean-out. The British directors were replaced by five Indian professionals, following which profits escalated. "All those directors were interested in was driving Jaguars and drawing fat salaries," reminisces Virani.

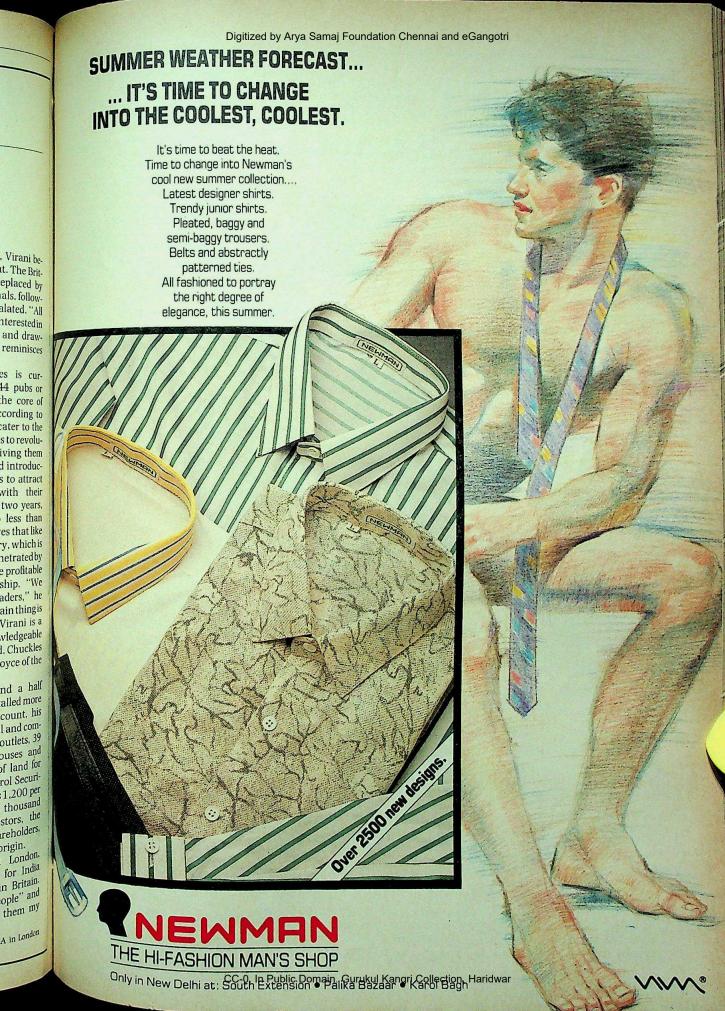
Control Securities is currently landlord of 544 pubs or public houses, still the core of British social life. According to Virani, pubs should cater to the entire family. He plans to revolutionise his pubs by giving them an 'Indian touch' and introducing buffets and discos to attract young executives with their families. In the next two years, he hopes to run no less than 2,000 pubs. He believes that like Britain's hotel industry, which is being increasingly penetrated by Asians, pubs are more profitable under Asian ownership. "We Indians are born traders," he

says matter-of-factly. "The main thing is we work hard." Ironically, Virani is a teetotaller. Yet he is knowledgeable about his ales. And also proud. Chuckles he: "My beers are the Rolls Royce of the industry."

Within the last year and a half Virani's acquisitions have totalled more than Rs 900 crore. At last count, his company owned 54 industrial and commercial properties, 41 retail outlets. 39 offices, nine hotels, 971 houses and apartments and 211 acres of land for development. Last year Control Securities declared a dividend of Rs 1,200 per share. Starting with several thousand predominantly British investors, the company now has 15,260 shareholders, most of whom are of Asian origin.

Despite many years in London. Virani still has a soft spot for India and the Asian community in Britain. He refers to them as "my people" and adds with emotion: "I owe them my success."

—SATINDER BINDRA in London



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MONIKA DEOL

An Electric Score

Indian entertainer becomes the rage on Canadian TV

HE'S known as the lady who's rocking the city of Toronto on its hinges. And she's doing it clad not just in black leather and chains but even in a saree. Twenty-fiveyear-old Monika Deol, originally from Jalandhar, is making waves across the Atlantic-as the hostess of Electric Circus, a live 90-minute dance show on Toronto TV. With the programme on the cable network she's now among the most popular

Indians in Canada. Every week-end, Monika invites young artistes and music aficionados to a studio where amid flashing strobes she gets the show kicking. "I watch her show regularly," enthuses 21-year-old Malvinder Grewal from Mississauga, a Toronto suburb.

And he's not the only one. Journalists badger her for interviews and she's splashed across national TV magazines. Even the older generation has succumbed to her verve on the tube.

But the road to fame has been a

Faced with racial alienation. Monika realised that the only way of gaining social acceptance was to prove her worth in a mainstream activity.

tough one for Monika. "I came up the hard way." is how the 5 ft 10 inch Monika describes it. After her Sikh family migrated to Canada from Jalandhar 15 years ago, the racial insults she faced made her realise that "the only way to be accepted was to prove your worth in a mainstream activity".

The "mainstream activity" that Monika decided to prove her worth in was music. Starting out as a disc jockey

Monika (top); and with her team in the studio: verve and easy warmth

in a small club, she graduated to managing her own rock band, Perfect Kiss. Then her hankering for life in the fast lane made her accept an assignment as hostess of a rock 'n roll TV series called Night Moves. "My entry into television was an accident," says Monika.

But the accident seems to have paid off. Monika landed herself a job as a reporter with City TV and eight months later she launched her live dance show, Electric Circus. Today she also anchors the entertainment section for City TV's late newscast and co-hosts a daily music show called Fax,

Yet showbiz is a far cry from what Monika has majored in—she has a bachelors in Psychology and English. But academics is not her cup of tea. "I feel I'm making a more important contribution in mainstream TV," she says.

Her show's contribution is to "expose singers to a larger audience". She says it has another purpose: "I sometimes wear sarees on the show to educate non-Indians about our culture. We Indians are different. Why shouldn't we celebrate it?'

But being an Indian hasn't always been an advantage for Monika. She still bristles with anger at the racial taunts she suffered in Canadian schools. Also, her family initially resisted her move into the world of TV. Recalls she: "My parents were hesitant. But I'm a balanced person. I don't drink, smoke or do drugs. Having principles is what my Indian background taught me." Hammering home the point about her Indian values, Monika says wryly: "My parents are now proud of me. That's more than you can say for Pamella Bordes."

Clearly, behind the glamour lies a rigorously maintained 14-hour-aday work schedule. Says she: "It takes the ability to deal with the stress of deadlines and presence of mind to make major decisions in split seconds.

What does she think is the secret of her success? "It takes a certain x-factor, the unexplainable, that makes people want to watch you. You've got to be honest with the camera. I like the camera and the camera likes me." And her plans for the future? "I'm doing well. Things are comfortable and I'm being paid to do something I like." And some thing, obviously, the Canadian audience also likes. —SATINDER BINDRA in Toronto

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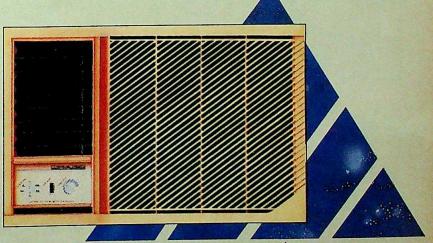
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KITTY PARTIES

The Kitten Brigade

Kitty parties have evolved from mere gatherings of bored housewives to perfumed arenas of one-upmanship: clothes, jewels, interiors, exteriors, food and of course, conversation,

THE silver-grey Mercedes purrs into the tacky government colony just as Rashmi Aggarwal is beginning to panic. Here she is in her new outfit-the sequinned parrots on her green salwar glistening in the sun-and the Mercedes she's borrowed for the kitty party is late. Mr Aggarwal is a government employee and the couple have a scooter. But it just wouldn't do to alight from one. Or even a taxi at Indu Malhotra's cascading marble mansion in the capital's nouveau riche Greater Kailash II. Nor would it do to turn up in last year's rage. Or worse: repeat a dress. And heaven help if two of them turned up in the same one.

The kitty party has now become a perfumed arena of one-upmanship: clothes, jewels, interiors, exteriors, food and of course, conversation. The "kitten" has turned positively gladiator-like in her battle to outshine. Who's been to the most off-the-beaten-track holiday? (Europe is a no-no these days. Go East and exotic is the latest call.) Whose husband travels more? Who has more tutors for her children? Where have you bought your antique kundan earrings? Which brand-name painter's canvas decorates your wall? And for how much have you bought it? And increasingly, talk turns to stocks and shares: the working woman and entrepreneur have now invaded the cloistered world.

Kitty parties have evolved beyond recognition. They started out as little gatherings of bored housewives who met at regular intervals over little nibblescold coffee and chaat-or even simple lunches. Some to play cards, others to compare notes and lives. But the real purpose was the kitty, essentially a middle class savings lottery or even an interest free loan. The kitty principle is quite simple. Each member—normally a kitty has 10 to 20-gives the hostess a fixed amount of money. A name is drawn through lots. The winner gets the entire

amount and her name is removed from the list. She has to wait for the next kitty cycle. Each member eventually gets her turn. The kick lies in getting it early in the game.

The kitty used to be a necessary windfall. In the pre-consumer days of the '80s. lump sums of money, for the middle classes, were impossible dreams. The kitty met urgent needs of the family: a refrigerator, a steel almirah, or winter clothes for the children.

Today, kitty parties are less needbased: the money is for the frills, and the thrill of a good gamble. The nouveau riche have moved in: you are known by the kitty you keep. The kitty party is the new symbol of social status.

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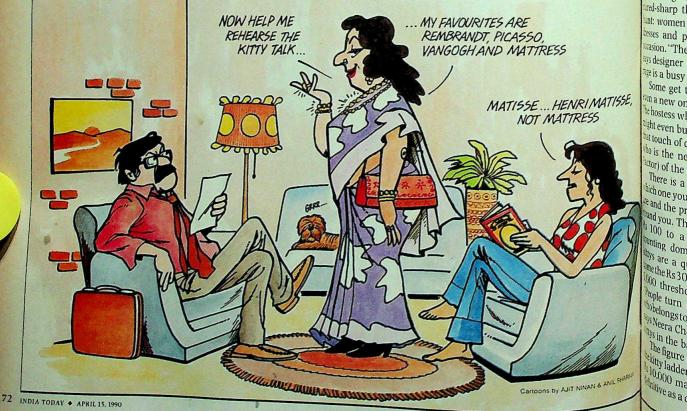
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nitive as a c

Kittys have also grown up. "Kitty parties have become cat parties," says svelte Reena Kapoor, 40, who designs for her family's sari shop in Delhi. The minute a woman leaves, the rest tear her apart her clothes, the food she serves, the





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The edge of competition is so manird-sharp that it triggers a boutique int: women beg, borrow or buy new and pieces of jewellery for the wasion. "They just want to be different," क designer Brinda Sahgal, whose gaae is a busy epicentre for new dresses. Some get their sofas upholstered, or a new one, if it's their turn to host. hehostess who wants to be the mostest th even buy or borrow a painting for touch of class—preferably a Husain ho is the new HCF (Highest Common ictor) of the chattering classes.

There is a clear cut kitty hierarchy: achone you go to determines who you and the price-tag which wraps itself and you. The bottom end ranges from 100 to a couple of hundred (not unling domestic servants for whom ys are a question of survival.) Next the Rs 300 to Rs 1,000 kittys. The Rs threshold is an important one. tuple turn up their noses at anyone belongs to a kitty less than Rs 1,000." Neera Chopra, a housewife with six he figure multiplies as you move up thy ladder until you reach the magic

10,000 mark: the level of arrival as

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or a Volvo in the garage. Above this coveted perch the ladder disappears into the misty hemispheres where the megarich dwell. In this rarefied world, the ladies don't even bother to meet. They send their money, neatly packaged, with a liveried chauffeur. And the hostess in solitaire splendour draws out the lucky winner.

TITTYS come in different sizes and shapes. The traditional kind, in which the wives of government and corporate personnel exchanged recipes, gossip, and daughter-in-law problems between hands of cards, continue with as much verve. Jor Bagh, Defence Colony, Malcha Marg and Sunder Nagar are the old hubs. These women have now become matronly, grandmothers—their daughters-in-law have satellite kittys. Politics has made inroads here: Rajiv Gandhi arouses strong passions of both anger and outright devotion amongst the older lot. V.P. Singh is not quite a conversation piece yet.

Then, there are their younger versions who confine talk to kids, "the number of tuitions", new boutiques, new diets, jewels and mother-in-law problems. The kitty net has spread its tentacles the widest here, covering all far-flung colonies of the capital to include the burgeoning new business classes.

The kittens have shifted battlefields,

from homes to hotels as competition to out-dish each other reached withering heights. "I would spend at least three days thinking of what new dishes I could serve.... You know how critical some women can be," says Bhavna Prakash, 41, a Delhi housewife.

It has become the charge of the kitten brigade, much to the despair of the fivestar hotel managers. "The noise level is the highest. So is their complaint rate: half of them always want their soup reheated," complains a manager of a Delhi coffee shop. "They really leave behind a mess." The kittens have now been pushed to the back of the more exclusive coffee shops. Not that the high visibility has been dimmed any. Complains another manager: "All of them seem to talk at the same time. But when the food arrives, there is a sudden silence.'

Sex is certainly not a new topic. But it's lost some of its blush. Says Ranjana Mehra, a housewife: "They'll talk about whom she's sleeping with or chasing. Or whom her husband is after." In other words, sex, lies and videotape. Blue films are an occasional topic, usually those brought back by husbands from trips abroad. Recently, Dirty Laundry kept the conversation at a bubbly blue high tide when the kittens were done with washing others' dirty linen. Everything blue isn't imported either. A more with-it kitten talked about her home-made blue movies.

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much as her predecessors or elders would about the achars they'd just bottled. "We placed the camera in the flower pot," she said.

But few kitty parties reach these dizzy heights. Confesssions of man-eaters are few and far between. And celluloid dreams are limited to discussions of Amitabh's fading charisma, the boldness of Rihaee and the cuteness of Salman Khan. "Salman Khan is so cute," gushed a fortyish kitten when the conversation turned to the new blockbuster, Maine Pyar Kiya. But she was cut short by another who told her that she shouldn't "go ga-ga over someone young enough to be her son". "Her instincts were anything but maternal," says Kapoor snidely.

Female locker room talk takes over. The more common topic among the older lot is how many times a week they make love. "Sometimes. we talk about different ways of making love," explains a particularly articulate, highflier woman entrepreneur who has a love-hate relationship with the kitty party syndrome. "Usually we discuss the party we've been to the night before. But, believe me, women not only compare notes on their husbands' performances in bed, some also talk about their lovers and

their escapades ," she says gleefully. From sons to lovers, they've come a long way. But these are just the fringe ladies of socialite evenings who participate in the more rare phenomenon of the coupling kitty, where it's all a matter of fair exchanges. During the evening kitty

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ITTYS have also grown into a Tom Cat: the male kitty has arrived on the scene. It's called a beesi. Men outbid each other over kittys ranging from nominal amounts like Rs 20 per person to the occasional astonishing amount of Rs 1 lakh per head.

At the upper end of the scale, the male kitty has evolved into upbeat variations of the stag party, a movable men's club with an extra kick.

Delhi, for instance, has a group of eight industrialists who meet every 10 days. Nothing so mundane as putting money into the kitty. They play poker and the winnings go into the kitty. Nor does the winner get anything as humdrumas money: with the kitty comes a tacehorse. And if there's still some money left in this till, a trip for two. Singapore swings or Bangkok.

With the high stakes come the real steaks, flown in from Europe. The accent here is on atmospherics: more foreign delights like canapes and, of



course, Black Knight.

For the bulk of kittywalas, it's business, not pleasure. Beesis are common among businessmen, brokers, agents, small-time producers and others in need of urgent short-term cash without too many questions asked. At a kitty auction, a group of men get together and pool in Rs 3,000 each every month. If the group has 20 men, it amounts to Rs 60,000.

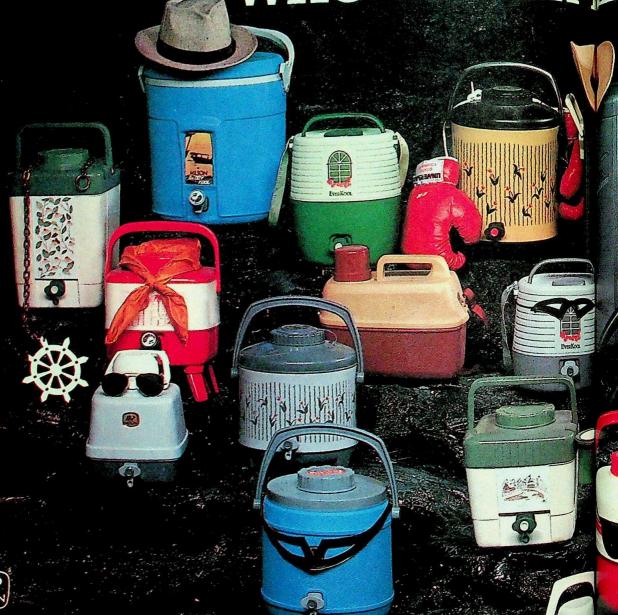
Then the action starts. It's like a

Dutch auction (where the price reduces from Rs 60,000 at each bid). One businessman says "Five short" Another, to keep the bidding going, says "15 short". If the first person is desperate, he will say "20 short". If the bidding stops at this stage, the amount (60,000-20,000=40,000) is given to the bidder. The rest is shared equally by the bidders-the entire tomcat brigade.

-SALIL TRIPATHI in Bombay

Names in this feature have been changed to conceal identity.)

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parties, the jobs of pulling out the chit and settling accounts done, the couples move on to discotheques and adventurous nights and dawns in unexpected places.

But the dolce vita for the majority is far more mundane. Business, not sex, is on most minds. The sisterhood is rapidly becoming an informal trade fair. Take Rajini Gupta, a bank manager in west Delhi. The kitty business over, she goes down to her car and brings up the new lot of saris she has got from the south. The cash flows again as the kanjeeverams get snapped up. Then, there's this enter-

reliability of the members and to make sure that nobody gathers the loot and never shows up again.

The new twist to kittys is the auction-jumping the queue in other words. Those desperate for moneybudding actresses in need of a wardrobe, a woman starting a boutique, placing a down payment on a flat, or putting together a dowry for her daughter-bid for it. "Generally, a Rs 1-lakh kitty is taken for Rs 50,000 to Rs 70,000. The cut-off point is Rs 80,000 and the rest of the money is shared by the members." explains a stage and film artiste.

ladies become mistresses of the game. after smoothing out their accents and manners.

The social change, of course, can be more than clothes-and-accent-deep. In smaller towns kittys have played the role of finishing schools, a kind of benign agent-provocateur. Take the mill town of Yamuna Nagar in Haryana. Until the advent of the kitty party some years ago, young housewives would usually be house-bound, waiting for son, husband or father-in-law to come home and be fed. Today, many of them are on a selfimprovement quest, inspired by others

at kitty parties. "Some of them have opened beauty parlours and boutiques. Others have started catering or Ikebana classes," says Nina Mehta, a housewife who spent several years there. "Now, they want their children to go to Doon School." Not to be left behind their sisters in the metropolis, they too have kitty party shopping trips to Hong Kong and Singapore. Groups get a discount also.

The sisterhood also has its good samaritan side. In one of the south Delhi colonies, there are three-tier kittys: mothers-in-law, the daughters-in law, and a combination of the two. A few years ago one of the

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daughters-in-law lost her husband and his parents threw her and her two young children out. The ladies, however, got together and put pressure on their kitten sister. The young woman now has two rooms of her own, in her in-law's house.

Where does all the money go? The kittens' imagination has no bounds, or boundaries. The super rich buy that exclusive antique kundan set, probably pawned by some nawab who's seen better days. They also buy property abroad—they have their own green channels to get money out of the country. The rest settle for the much more mundane. They satisfy themselves with a new silk sari, a mixi, a piece of jewellery, or contributions towards a family holiday.

The kitty party is an ostentatious charade. It is a merry-ground that spins ever faster. It's more brightly painted. more gaudy, more mesmeric. And it doesn't stop. Leaving those who clamber on board spinning madly on.

—MADHU JAIN



prising couple in Bombay who deal in imported cars. Kitty parties are not among their favourite things. But they go regularly because of a ready, captive clientele.

The kittens are not into cash alone. There are sovereign kittys: the ladies pool in guineas. Similarly, sari kittys are also gaining currency: the winner gets an expensive silk sari. In yet another, women collectively bought a painting. Then, there's the great gambler kitty: this one is fattened with the winnings from card games, and the winner takes all. The 21-card rummy is a hot favourite these days, before this 13-card flush was.

Kittys, especially in Bombay, have also spawned a new species: the kitty promoter. Such kittys start from Rs 1 lakh onwards with members contributing between Rs 10,000 and Rs 20,000. The job of the promoter is to get a group of people together to form a kitty group which meets at various intervals, usually once a month. But the most important part of the job is to guarantee the

The large kittys are unisex, a mixed bag. When kittys reach the flashpoint of Rs 2 to Rs 3 lakh, the husbands enter the kitty paradise. It then becomes a family affair. And men in search of handy lump sums to fuel their businesses move in, as do the professionals (see box).

OMETIMES the kitty party becomes so big that halls in suburban Bombay hotels are rented and microphones used. Promoters, like the entrepreneur kitten, usually have more than one kitty in the bag. "We start five or six kittys. We take from one kitty and feed the others. And when the money runs out we pick up another kitty. The last two or three will be saved at the end of the year," explains a promoter.

Besides the money and status, there's another side to the kitty party coin. They are also a catalyst for social change, helping the provincial kitten to acquire the ways of the world: the influx from Ludhiana and Jalandhar is not insignificant and in no time have these

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DHU JAIN





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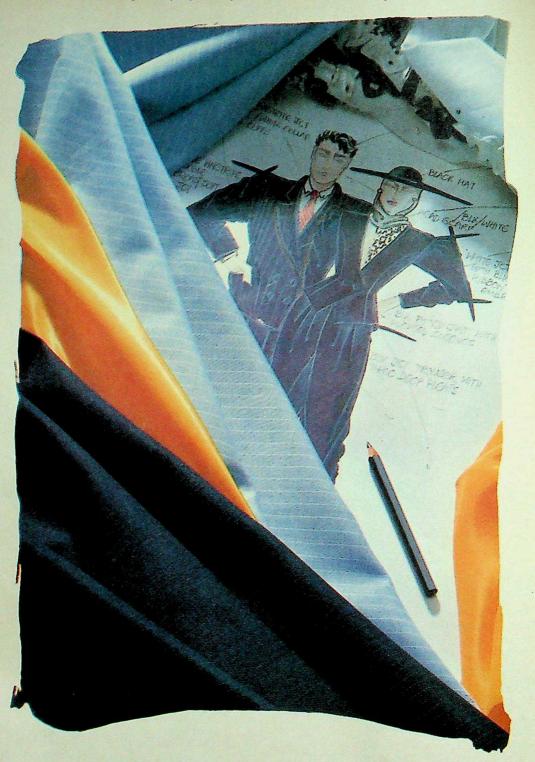
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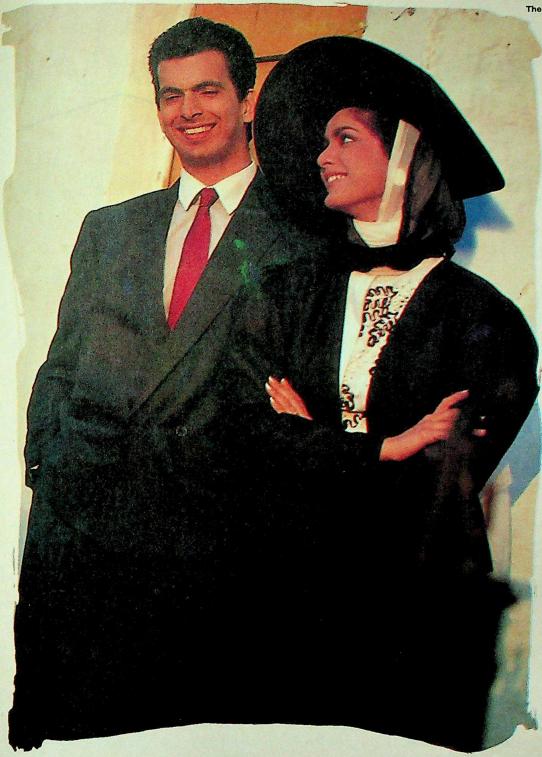


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WEST BENGAL

Basu's Perestroika

Industrialists flock to the state as a communist chief minister becomes the darling of the country's capitalists

"What Bengal thinks today, the rest of India thinks tomorrow.'

OR generations of Bengalis, Gopal Krishna Gokhale's oft-quoted dictum of 1905 was nothing but a cruel joke. But that seems to be changing. After nearly three decades of industrial decline, the state's economy is poised to grow faster than ever before—thanks largely to a sympathetic Central Government which depends on Left support, and a communist leader who has become the darling of the country's capitalists.

Things were vastly different not long ago. West Bengal was the graveyard of Indian industry. There was no power for halftheday, roads were pot-holed, phones didn't work. Businessmen who'd made their fortunes in the state had run away leaving dying industrial units and starying workers. Right from the late-'60s until recently, there were no substantial investments in industry or the crumbling infrastructure. The number of industrial licences issued slumped from 107 in 1974 to 25 in 1988.

There was, in fact, disinvestment. An endless list of reputed Indian and multinational concerns shifted base from Calcutta. During those years, few corporate chieftains would have disagreed with Winston Churchill who paid a visit to the 'city of night' towards the end of the last century and wrote: "I shall always be glad to have seen it... namely, that it will be unnecessary for me ever to see it again."

Today, as West Bengal's capital celebrates its 300th birthday. it's not quite the world's number one urban disaster area or the dying city Rajiv Gandhi thought it was. It's where the action is. At least for the Indian business community. Never have the dingy corridors of Writers' Building-the seat of the state Governmentseen such a long procession of the wellheeled as in the last four months.

And 13 has become a lucky number for Jyoti Basu-about to complete 13 years as India's longest serving chief minister-much as he would personally be appalled at the analogy. Basu is now not only a key player in national politics but also the only politician who has met



Basu; and (right) Dasgupta: overseeing an industrial revival



Basu has found an able lieutenant in USeducated Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta, who has proved to be a tough but skilful negotiator.

just about everybody who is somebody in the corporate world in recent times. And businessmen are vying with one another to shower praise on Basu. Some samples: "He is the most civilised chief minister in India," says Russi Mody, chairman of the Rs 1,861-crore Tata Steel, the country's largest private company. "He is the tallest statesman in the country, the Gorbachev of West Bengal," says K.S.B. Sanyal, president, Bengal Chamber of Commerce and chairman of the profitable, Rs 200crore public sector Andrew Yule group.

It's not just industrialists who are going ga-ga. Economists too laud Basu's pragmatic approach. "He acts like an impartial umpire," observes eminent economist Amiya K. Bagchi. As for Basu himself, he characteristically remains unfazed by the applause. Last fortnight, while addressing a group of industrialists, he reiterated that the Rajiv Gandhi government had specifically discouraged investments in the state.

PROSPECTS

- The Rs 3,000-crore Haldia petrochemicals complex.
- A Rs 900-crore 630 MW power plant at Bakreshwar.
- A Rs 700-crore steel plant at Malda.
- Steel plants at Durgapur and Burnpur being modernised.
- Public sector units in telecom, electronics and currency printing to come up.

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The Government-industry relationship is excellent."

ISB SANYAL htslænt. Bengal Chamber of Commerce



The power situation in West Bengal is no worse than elsewhere in India. But it would help if supplies were managed better."

JAGDISH SAPRU Chairman, ITC







I the clout that Basu has recently quired in New Delhi has attracted of businessmen, the 76-year-old minister has found an able lieutenin Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta, Educated at the Massachussets Insticof Technology, US, Dasgupta taught nomics at Calcutta University before ing the hurly-burly of politics. Of late, lew facet of his personality has arged: that of a tough but skilful negotith was he who dealt with a host of strialists before awarding the conat for the Haldia petrochemicals act to the Tatas instead of the . Goenka group.

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Clearly, Dasgupta is a man in a hurry. early-March, Sudarshan Birla landed with a long face. After almost 10 years Jy-dallying, he told the state Governthat he wanted to back out of the 150-ctore polyester filament yarn (PFY) et he was planning to establish at Barjora in Bankura district.

Chairman, Tata Steel

Dasgupta told him to give his opinion in writing. Next day, phone calls flew to Bombay. Two days later, representatives of the Ambani-controlled Reliance Industries were in Calcutta. And in less than a week, the state Government had signed a new memorandum of understanding with the Ambanis for the PFY project.

UCH quick decision-making was unthinkable six months ago. Still, though the political leadership is on the ball, it cannot be said that bureaucrats in the state have become as dynamic as their counterparts in, say, Maharashtra or Gujarat. Admits Commerce and Industries Secretary Bikram Sarkar: "We have to do our bit to aggressively market the state's facilities.'

Even if many in the state doubt that the abhaber sansar (family perpetually in penury) in Bengal will be a thing of the

past, the writing on the wall clearly indicates economic growth:

► A sum of at least Rs 3,000 crore is to be directly invested in the Haldia petrochemicals complex by mid-1993 and this is expected to result in indirect investments twice the amount on downstream industries resulting in employment for some 1.5 lakh people.

► The Central Government recently agreed "in principle" to allow Soviet credit to be used to set up a Rs 900-crore 630 mw power plant at Bakreshwar. Further, clearances have been granted to set up a Rs 900-crore 500 mw power plant by the Calcutta Electricity Supply Corporation controlled by the Goenkas.

► Two major telecom/electronics units involving an investment of more than Rs 150 crore are planned at Salt Lake, Calcutta, by two public sector concerns, Indian Telephone Industries, Bharat Electronics Ltd, and the multinational Siemens.

▶ The two steel plants in the state at Durgapur and Burnpur will be modernised at a cost of about Rs 10,000 crore but this may take 10 years.

 Other units in the pipeline include a Rs 700-crore steel plant in Malda to be set up by the C.K. Birla group and a Rs 300crore currency note printing press at Salboni, Midnapur.

Dasgupta, however, says that the real thrust to industry would eventually be provided by the growing purchasing power of the rural population. Reeling off figures, he notes: "Food production has risen from 75 lakh tonnes to 115 lakh

PROBLEMS

Power position will not pick up before 1991.

Centre unlikely to scrap freight equalisation on coal and steel.

Centre unlikely to levy consignment tax on inter-state movement of goods.

Crores to be spent on revamping Haldia fertiliser plant and ^{§ant}aldih power plant.

tonnes in the last 13 years; the daily wage rate in agriculture has jumped from Rs 5.60 to over Rs 20 in many areas; potato production has increased threefold; output of oilseeds has doubled since 1985; and horticulture is thriving." All this, he feels, indicates that a

But most major industrial units are immune to power cuts as they now have their own captive generation. Besides. the situation is worse in some other states. "It's just a question of better management of supplies so that lifts don't stop mid-floor," says Jagdish under the river connecting Haldia with the Falta export processing zone, 60 km from Calcutta, using private funds.

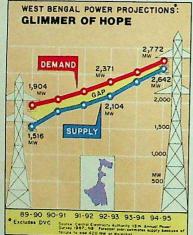
Still, the state's track record is pretty poor. For instance, the incomplete second Hoogly bridge in Calcutta standslike an eyesore today. The bridge should have been ready over a decade ago at a cost of Rs 85 crore. Instead, it won't be opened for more than a year, that is, after a sum of over Rs 300 crore has been spent on it.

There are other monuments of industrial inefficiency: the Santaldih power plant which bore the brunt of the country's efforts to indigenise turbines and boilers, and the Haldia plant of Fertilisers Hindustan Corporation which contains a veritable museum of equipment from all corners of the world. Huge sums have to be spent if these two units are to be revived. The same is true for most of the 62 jute mills in the state.

Though the Left Front Government is no longer being discriminated against by the Centre, many of its long-standing demands are unlikely to be conceded in a hurry. These include the doing away with freight equalisation on coal and



Charts by B.K. SHARMA



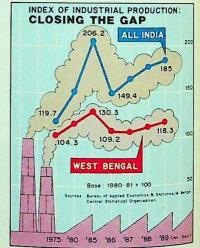
Site for Haldia project: ambitious plans

Sapru, chairman of the Calcutta-based ITC Ltd.

As in the case of power, the state has suffered from an image problem in another area-labour. Myths about worker militancy have plagued West Bengal since the first Leftist government came to power in 1967. The fact is that the state has lost an unusually large number of mandays on account of lock-outs-not strikes-in sick industries. "There has been malicious propaganda about the working class in Bengal," says Manoranjan Roy, general secretary of the сы(м) affiliated Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU).

The citu spokesman says workers are willing to increase productivity if management is responsible and the technology and equipment used efficient. Numerous instances can be cited of surplus workers retiring from enterprises like Bata, Hindustan Motors, Jay Engineering, Texmaco, Dunlop and Gramophone Co. Many industrialists say that labour is today far more militant in Maharashtra and Kerala than Bengal.

If labour and power are no longer perceived as constraining industry, the road transport sector still poses many headaches. At one level, the state Government is not averse to involving private companies in road construction. There is also a proposal to dig a tunnel



steel imposed in the '50s which robbed industries in the eastern region of their locational advantages.

Still, the overall mood is upbeat. "In no respect is West Bengal worse than any other Indian state for investors. asserts Sanjeev Goenka, vice-president. RPG Enterprises and incumbent president of the Indian Chamber of Commerce. Concurs economist Bagchi: "The chances of an industrial revival in the state are much better than before.

The seeds have been sown. Now. despite what cynics may claim, it's justa matter of time.

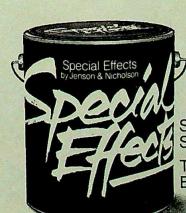
-PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA in Calcutta with bureau reports

land reforms based agricultural strategy is paying off.

Not that everything is hunky-dory. For one, Calcutta's infamous load-shedding will return with a vengeance this summer, reviving memories of the late-'70s and early-'80s. Reason: new generating capacity would not come up till later this year. In the months ahead, the state electricity board will be appealing to the consumers to reduce consumption between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. "But from 1991 till around 1996, West Bengal should have surplus power," asserts Jahar Sengupta, chairman, ICI India Ltd, who has headed an official committee on power in the state.

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1990-91 BUDGET

Confronting the Dragon

The Government is trying to reduce the budget deficit but it may not be able to check a probable 7 to 8 per cent inflation which will neutralise gains.

Nthe end, it was a bit of an anti-climax. A nation that had been steeling itself for a stiff dose of taxation found some of its worst fears belied. Predictably, there was an attractive package of concessions for rural India. But industry, which was expecting a hard bonk on the head, received only a mild tap. So stock-markets boomed and captains of consumer goods manufacturing companies heaved huge sighs of relief.

But a crucial question remained. Can Union Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate tame the budget deficit dragon without stoking the fires of inflation? A classic conundrum faced by governments all over the world that is yet to be resolved. Chances are that Dandavate won't succeed. The reason is obvious: of the Rs 4,290-crore that is expected to be raised during 1990-91. as much as 58.3 per cent will come from hefty hikes in the administered prices of petroleum products, railway

freight and passenger fares, besides telecommunication and postal tariffs.

Government spokesmen argue that the impact of 'cost-push' factors fuelling inflation, such as the hike in administered prices, will be reduced with the scalingdown of the budget deficit. A lower deficit, it is claimed, will depress 'demand-pull'

Why the budget deficit may exceed the projected Rs 7,206 crore

- No provision has been made for the proposed employment quarantee programme.
- Higher procurement prices are likely to hike the food subsidy bill.
- The public sector may not be able to generate resources.
- ▶ No provision for one-rank, onepension scheme for ex-servicemen.

factors which contribute to rising prices. In other words, if money supply in the system can be reduced, people will spend less. But that may not happen.

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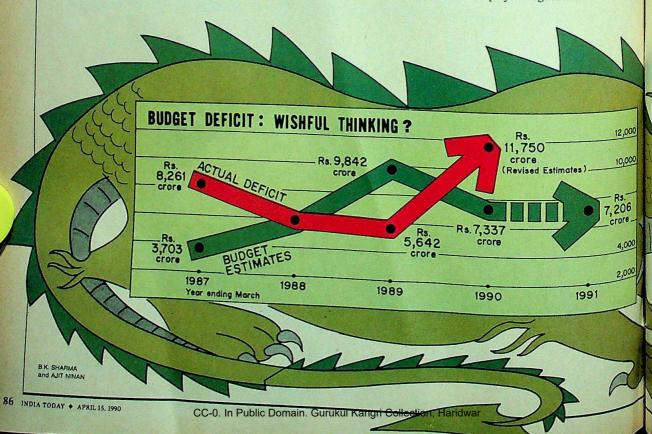
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Simply put, the economic gains which may accrue out of the proposals contained in the National Front Government's first budget, might be neutralised—or turned

into losses—if there is 7 to 8 per cent inflation, which can't be ruled out Though much has been said about the increase in the defence budget because of the trouble on our borders, the difference between the revised estimate of defence expenditure in 1989-90 (Rs 14,500 crore) and the budget estimate for 1990-91 (Rs 15,750 crore) is only 8.6 per cent.

There are a number of pointers which indicate why the budget deficit may exceed the projected Rs 7,206 crore (see box). First, no provision has been made in the budget for the new employment guarantee scheme. Since



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500 crore was spent on the Jawahar yojana by the previous governthe new scheme is likely to envisage total twice the amount (Rs 1,000 if not more. Secondly, once issue 100 foodgrains are raised following mass in procurement prices—which anticipated during the coming kharif subsidies on food and fertilisers balloon. The budget estimates for bidies have assumed that food producoduring the year ahead will remain we or less stagnant. That may not be. But the Government dismisses such nicism as speculative. "The choice beieuswas to let things drift, borrow more consume more or to take corrective ation now, however difficult," Dandaale said in his budget speech of March 19. Enext day, Finance Secretary Bimal an asserted that "even if one takes the dest possible definition of deficit, we are ring to bring it down".

Chief Economic Adviser Nitin Desai outends that official claims about reducthe deficit are not as outrageous as syseem: "People forget that in 1988-89, eactual budget deficit was Rs 5,642 are against the initial estimate of \$7,484 crore." Officials also point out hat the expected revenue deficit in 1990lat Rs 13,032 crore is lower than the rised estimate for 1989-90 (Rs 12,346

PRICES FUELLING

Increase in

Additional amount expected to be aised in 1990-91

morease m	ruiseu III 1990-91
Prices of Petrol (by Rs. 1.25 per litre ex-storage), Diesel (by 54 paise per litre), Aviation Turbine Fuel and Import Duty on Crude Oil.	Rs. 836 crore
Postal Charges	Rs. 172 crore
Telecommunication Tariffs	Rs. 600 crore
Railway Freight and Passenger Fares	Rs. 892 crore
TOTAL	Rs. 2,500 crore
Additional resources to be mobilised by 1990-91 Central Budget (excluding Railways)	Rs. 1,790 crore
TOTAL	Rs. 4,290 crore

OF THE TOTAL RESOURCES OF RS 4290 CRORE EXPECTED TO BE RAISED BY THE CENTRAL **GOVERNMENT IN 1990-91, RS 2500 CRORE OR** 58.3% WILL COME FROM HIKING COST OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION



TEXTILES

Cotton for the Picking

ERE'S some good news for 'king' cotton. After being ridden roughshod by the synthetic fibres industry for more than five years, it is back with a vengeance. The new budget offers a range of concessions to the cotton and jute industry. On the other hand, it will make man-made fibres more expensive.

Last fortnight, the Government hiked excise duties on a range of synthetic fibres and yarn, including polyester and nylon filament yarn and acrylic and viscose staple fibre. The budget also proposed to raise taxes on crucial raw

The duty relief on polyester fibre will be neutralised by additional taxes on raw materials.'

> ANIL AMBANI Reliance Industries

materials like purified terephthalic acid (PTA) and di-methyl terephthalate (DMT). At the same time, concessions were given to manufacturers of cotton textiles in the organised and cottage sectors.

Predictably, the cotton textiles industry is jubilant. "It's a good budget," says G. Radhakrishnan, secretary-general, Indian Cotton Mills Federation. One major sop is the reduction in the customs duty on imported textile machinery. To assist the ailing jute industry, the budget has proposed total duty exemption on jute products like blankets and carpets.

As a measure of rationalisation, the

SHARAD SAXENA

burden of excise duty will be shifted from cotton fabric to the yarn stage. This is expected to reduce the large-scale tar evasion which takes place when fabric produced by powerlooms is processed and raise Rs 200 crore of excise duty.

The Government argues its policies have been designed to give a fillip to production of cotton textiles—78 per cent of the fibre content of the country's fabric production is cotton—and to protect handloom weavers' interests. And as Revenue Secretary R.L. Mishra explains: "We wish to discipline the prices of indigenous synthetic fibres and yam

by holding out a credible threat of cheap imports."

This is the ostensible reason why the budget has proposed that import duties on synthetic fibres and even DMT, PTA and mono-ethylene glycol (MEG) be scaled down. Central Board of Ex-

We wish to discipline prices of synthetic fibres by holding out threats of cheap imports."

R.L. MISHRA Revenue Secretary

crore) if one considers that the second figure excludes the Rs 2,300-crore of surplus funds of the Oil Coordination Committee which had been transferred to the Central budget.

Government spokesmen say that, for the first time, a half-yearly review of the Central budget will be conducted six months later. If needed, policy corrections can be made midstream. That in itself, may not be enough to bring the deficit down. For there are other considerations which could swell the Government expenditure beyond that projected in the budget. For example, the one-rank, one-pension scheme for ex-servicemen which will be announced later this year, may deplete government coffers by Rs 400 crore.

The budget deficit will also go upifthe public sector fails to raise adequate resources to meet the dearness allowance (DA) claims

PRICES: PICKING POCKETS

Ex-factory prices	BUDGET	POST- BUDGET
VCP	Rs. 8,700	Rs. 8,900
Washing Machine (Expensive)	Rs. 7,200	Rs. 7,500
Audio System	Rs. 8,400	Rs. 8,750
Maruti Cars	Rs. 90,000	Rs. 95,000
Ice-cream (Per litre)	Rs. 18	Rs. 20
Refrigerators (upto 310 litres)	Rs. 10,408	Rs. 10, 700
Truck / Bus Tyres (10-20 ply)	Rs. 5,600	Rs. 5,800
Cigarettes (packet of 10) Charms filter	Rs. 3, 25	Rs. 4.00
Paints (per 4 litres)	Rs. 194	Rs. 207
Chocolates (per kg)	Rs. 650	Rs. 700
These represent the effe	ect of only excise dut	

of its employees-after providing for its investment require ments. Desai has a different point of view. He says that while the budget provision for DA Wa Rs 1,000 crore in 1988-90, no part of this sum was actually expended. Hence, a 'nominal provision of Rs 100 crore has been made for the current financial year (1990-91).

If Dandavate's budget has doled out Rs 1,000 crore to banks for waiving loans to farm ers in keeping with his party election promise, the burden of additional taxes has fallen of industry. The budget proposes to raise an extra Rs 800 crore from the corporate sector. One way of achieving this will be by remoring the investment allowand provision which allows compa nies to obtain tax write-offs and amounts spent on capital invest ment. The income tax rate of companies has also brought down by a fifth. free

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and Customs Chairman Rekhi points out that in Gase of MEG. the Governathas irrefutable evidence "certain foreign suppliers dumping MEG in the counat artificially low prices". Synthetic fibres and yarn nducers complain the new posts will place an addimal tax burden of Rs 300 are on the industry. Says K Modi, managing direc-Modipon Ltd: "It's a comtereversal of the Governmi's 1985 textile policy th encouraged

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musacture of man-made fibres on the and that this was the best way to vide cheap clothing to the poor." diclaims by increasing the duty on on yarn, the Government will actuhurt the poor and middle classes pare the main buyers of nylon cloth. Manufacturers also complain that duty reduction on imported fibres ether with the hike in excise duty will, fact, make indigenous yarn more censive than imported yarn (see it). "Considering that imports of synkicyarn, like polyester filament yarn, under open general licence, cheap ports are bound to adversely affect mestic producers," asserts F.C. Ruspresident, J.K. Synthetics, which is

SQUEEZE ON SYNTHETICS

	PRE- BUDGET	POST- BUDGET	IMPORTED
Nylon Filament			
Yarn	225	245	205
Polyester			W
Filament Yarn	180	195	166
Acrylic			
Staple Fibre	75	75.23	84

likely to fork out an extra Rs 17 crore this year because of higher excise duties. Rustagi feels the Government's excise revenue from the industry may come down due to a fall in production.

Government spokesmen, however, argue the tax hikes are justified as none of the companies manufacturing synthetic fibres and yarn have passed on the benefits of excise duty concessionsaggregating around Rs 800 crore in the last five years—to the consumer as was expected of them. Finance Ministry officials say the man-made fibres industry hasn't been uniformly penalised.

For example, the budget has proposed that taxes on polyester staple fibre (PSF) be reduced. This was prompted by the fact that PSF, more than other synthetic fibres, is amenable for blending with cotton yarn. But the industry views it differently. Claims Anil Ambani of Reliance Industries: "The duty relief on PSF will be neutralised by the imposition of additional duty on PTA and DMT.'

With raw material prices of both PTA and DMT going up, industry observers contend that the proposed excise duty changes might make PTA more attractive than pmr (the two can be substituted). Espe-

cially after the Government ordered Reliance, the country's sole PTA producer. to reduce its price from Rs 32,000 a tonne to Rs 24,500. Says V.N.V. Iyengar, vice-chairman, Ester India Ltd: "The price differential will come down from 12 per cent to 4 per cent in favour of PTA and we may have to shift from DMT to PTA.

Does this mean Reliance will benefit? No, argues the Finance Ministry. Secretary Mishra says the duty structure was calibrated to ensure that neither DMT nor PTA users obtain undue gains. Imbalances, if any, will be rectified, he adds.

On one count, however, there is no dispute: prices of synthetic and blended fabrics will go up.

-SURAJEET DAS GUPTA with bureau reports

V hile the move to withdraw investment allowance has not been welcomed, the budget provides some sops to industry.

Fr cent to 40 per cent.

the Government justifies these steps he ground that the investment allowprovision has been "misused" by in highly profitable companies to them to pay no taxes. It is also felt the investment allowance didn't disagefirms from using capital intensive Companies tended to inflate at costs to avail of the benefits," says andra Kampani, former president of Bombay Stock Exchange.

hmany company chiefs feel that the of provisions may slow down the of investment. Says Arun Bharat managing director, Shri Ram Fi-The proposal to remove the proviby investment allowance will turn be detriment allowance will be detrimental to the expansion of intensive projects."

companies which have heavy

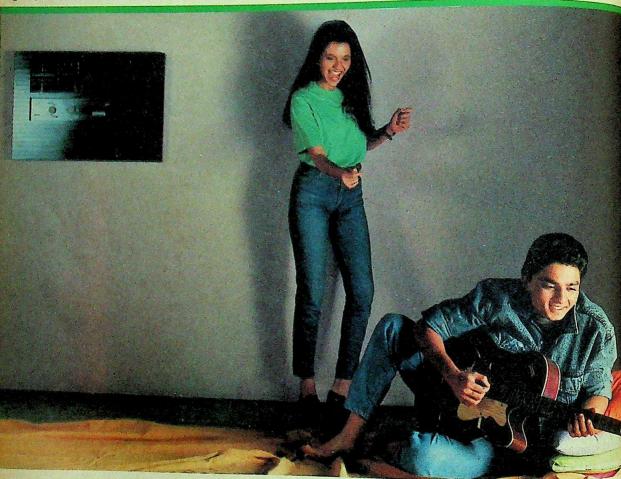
investments in the pipeline, the decline in the income tax rate will be more than offset by the rise in their tax burden on account of the removal of investment allowance benefits. But other concerns are unlikely to be affected. "Since the pharmaceutical industry is not particularly capital intensive, the budget proposals will not have much of an impact on us," points out Humayun Dhanrajgir, managing director, Glaxo India.

Fthe move to do away with investment allowance benefits hasn't exactly been welcomed by industry, the budget contains a number of other sops for companies. The minimum tax on book profits is to be removed. The way inter-corporate dividends are taxed is to be changed to discourage the holding of private wealth in closely-held companies. The changes in

the gift tax laws that make them donee-based instead of donor-based, are likely to check tax evasion and curb conspicuous consumption to an extent.

Certain segments of industry are, as always, delighted with the budget. One is the engineering sector. "We're quite satisfied," exclaims a spokesman of the Confederation of Engineering Industry (CEI). He says the 5-per cent reduction in the excise duty on indigenous capital goods will boost machinery production. Also, the lowering of customs duties on quality-control and pollution-control equipment is welcome as it will help industries modernise and become ecology-conscious. In any case, such sophisticated equipment is not manufactured within the country and the reduction in import duties will not hurt domestic industry, the CEI spokesman adds.

Companies producing computers and television sets were anticipating a huge tax burden and were pleasantly surprised when they realised that the budget



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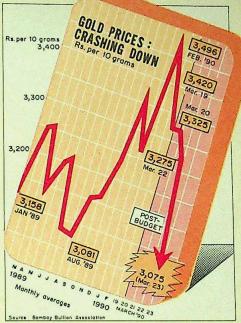
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Out of Bonds

HERE was much revelry on the streets of Bombay's Zaveri Bazaar on March 19, the night Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate announced the proposal to abolish the Gold Control Act of 1963. The Act required dealers to maintain detailed records of sources of gold and sales. Bullion dealers and jewellers felt the decision to do away with the Act would boost business. Their immediate expectation was that gold prices would crash, thus reducing the gap between international and domestic prices. This, in turn, was expected to stem the illegal inflow of the yellow metal.

True to expectations, gold prices crashed by Rs 500-700 per tola (about 10 grams) in the three days following the budget announcement. But many see this as a temporary phenomenon. Revenue Department officials also believe that the removal of the Act will not curb smuggling in the long run.

Dandavate, in his budget speech, stated that the Act "had been largely ineffective" in curbing domestic gold demand and that its removal would benefit many small artisans and goldsmiths. His remarks were greeted by much thumping of tables. Even opposition politicians like the veteran



Congress(I) leader N.G. Ranga welcomed the move. A note of dissent, however, came from former finance minister Pranab Mukherjee who said the proposal would only help large gold merchants. Shantilal Sonawala, president, Bombay Bullion Association, first described the decision as "a bold move". Subsequently he said he would comment on the merits of removing the Act in detail only after the budget was passed.

According to a survey conducted by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence,

the demand for gold in India at 167 tonnes per year is lower than the amounts that are smuggled in. The stock of gold privately held in the country is estimated to be anywhere between 7,500 tonnes and 15,000 tonnes. This means that the domestic demand for the yellow metal can be easily met if a small percentage of this gold stock is recycled.

This is the rationale for scrapping the Act. But much of the gold coming in constitutes payments for narcotics smuggled out of India. The decline in gold prices may be no indication of a major offloading of private reserves.

Logically, such stocks should come into the market when prices are soaring, not nose-diving.

In any case, it is curious that the finance minister of a developing nation like India should be initiating moves which will encourage investment in gold instead of channelising private savings to more beneficial avenues for the country's development.

> -RAGHU NANDAN DHAR with bureau reports

Uuriously, industries which should be happy are not and those which have been hit are not particularly peeved.

roposals hadn't touched them at all. the export sector is also happy as the adget has continued the thrust on aport promotion. Says Ramu Deora, resident, Federation of Indian Export Organisations: "It's a fabulous budget almost every suggestion made by our association has been accepted.'

Still, there are other sections of instry which should apparently have ten happy but are not. The turnover ant which exempts small scale units paying excise duty has been apped up from Rs 15 lakh to Rs 20 lakh. But we were hoping for an increase in limit to around Rs 50 lakh," com-All Srinivasa Rao, president, deration of Associations of Small Inostries of India.

Like former finance minister N.D. Tiwari who wanted to woo Indian women by reducing taxes on kajal and kum-kum, Dandavate hoped to add a bit of spice to his budget by exempting pickle manufacture from excise duty. He also reduced taxes on coffee. That should have pleased coffee and pickle producers. But they're not overjoyed. Says H.S. Jalan, head of the Indana group which manufactures instant coffee and pickles: "It's no big deal. The reduction will have no effect on retail prices-on the contrary, prices may go up due to the rise in transportation costs.'

Curiously, certain industries which should logically be displeased with the budget are not particularly peeved. Assemblers of video cassette players and recorders were expecting to be badly hit by the budget but the proposed hike in duties has been perceived as harmless pinpricks. And the favourite whipping boy of every fi-

nance minister, namely, the cigarette industry, was mentally prepared for a huge dose of taxation.

While proposing to raise an extra Rs 131 crore from this industry, Dandavate remarked: "I shall be more than happy if my actual collections are much less due to a fall in cigarette consumption." Will that happen? Some cigarette manufacturers think so. Says K.K. Modi, president, Godfrey Philips: "Tobacco consumers may switch from cigarettes to the hookah.'

Even if cigarette consumption does not fall, companies manufacturing icecream and jams apprehend that the hike in taxes on their products will increase retail prices, thereby lowering sales. Y.K. Kapoor, chairman, Northland In-

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ms Pvt. Ltd labad 380 009 INCOME TAX

Mixed Bag

F Indian companies have emerged relatively unscathed by the budget, it is the upper middle class which will get it in the neck. While the rise in the income tax exemption limit from Rs 18,000 a year to Rs 22,000 will result in one million persons getting out of the tax net, at the same time upper and upper middle class salaried

individuals will have to cough up higher amounts as income tax.

Says Nimesh Kampani, managing director. J.M. Financial & Investment Consultancy Services, a Bombay-based merchant banking company: "Higher income earners are at a disadvantage, but this was expected from Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate's budget." On the other hand, Raghu Palat, regional audit manager, American Express Bank—who worked out the two models calculating the tax burden on a typical junior and a senior

company executive (see chart)—feels the budget is regressive and that it will squeeze the salaried sections.

The BJP leader L.K. Advani is also disappointed. Says he: "I expected the income tax exemption limit to go up to Rs 30.000." But the lower middle classes are not cribbing.

Dandavate justifies the changes on the ground that they would make "savings-linked incentives more equitable for taxpayers in different income slabs". An official spokesman explains that salaried persons earning

up to Rs 3,500 a month would gain while those earning Rs 1 lakh or more a year would have to pay higher taxes. those earning between Rs 50,000 and Rs 1 lakh a year, the income tax would be higher or lower depending on the amounts saved.

The budget is also likely to boost the individual investor's interest in the capital markets due to the finalisation of the equitylinked savings scheme announced last year. Which is all very fine. But if the annual rate of inflation crosses 7 per cent-as is likely given the rise in the costs of railway transport and petrol-all such tax gains may be illusory.

—SHIV TANEJA
with bureau reports

MODEL 1 JUNIOR EXECUTIVE

Assume: taxable salaried income after standard deductions is Rs 44,000 a year; contribution to company PF is Rs 3,000 and that to public PF is Rs 6,000; premium paid on an LIC policy is Rs 3,000; and an additional Rs 10,000 has been invested in shares which is eligible for deduction from taxable income under Sec. 80CC. The impact: he gains.

MODEL 2 SENIOR EXECUTIVE

Assume: taxable salaried income after standard deductions is Rs 1.5 lakh; contribution to company PF is Rs 12,000 and that to public PF is Rs 18,000; LIC premium is Rs 10,000; and investments in capital issues is Rs 20,000. Impact: he loses.

	EXISTING RULES	PROPOSED RULES
Gross taxable income less	44,000	44,000
■ Deductions under 80C for		
Rs 12,000 invested in PF and LIC	9,000	NIL
Deductions under 80CC for		
Rs 10,000 invested	5,000	NIL
■ Net taxable income less	30.000	44.000
Rebates under 80C (new Sec. 88)		
20 per cent of Rs 12,000	NIL	2,400
80CC (new Sec. 88A) 20 per cent		
of Rs 10,000	NIL	2,000
NET TAX PAYABLE	2,900	1,400
		GAIN 1,500
Gross taxable income less Under Sec. 80C Under Sec. 80CC Net taxable income Gross tax payable less Rebates under Sec. 80C (88)	1,50,000 20,200 10,000 1,19,000 41,904	1,50,000 NIL NIL 1,50,000 56,808
20 per cent of Rs 12,000 Sec. 80CC (88A) 20 per cent of Rs 10,000	NIL NIL	8,000 4,000
NET TAX PAYABLE	41,904	44,808 LOSS 2,904

hough the budget ostensibly increases the tax burden on the rich, inflation that is likely to spiral will hurt the poor most.

dustries claims that the average price of a bottle of jam will go up by at least Re 1 on account of higher taxes and that this may result in reduced consumption.

And Shailesh Gandhi, managing director, Vadilal Industries argues that the imposition of a 10-per cent excise duty on ice-cream will have a "terrible impact" on the sales of organised sector manufacturers.

The Government's calculations, however, indicate the impact of higher taxes on prices will be marginal (see chart). Some other budget proposals have been welcomed, though not by all. These include the decision to abolish the Gold Control Act, the restructuring of taxes on synthetic fibres and yarn to favour production of cotton textiles, and, significantly, the hike in the income tax

exemption limit (see boxes).

Just before concluding his budget speech, Dandavate described himself as "a man of science, wedded to non-doctrinaire socialism". Pragmatic, many of

the budget proposals certainly seem to be. As for the socialism bit, that's a matter of debate. For though the budget ostensibly increases the tax burden on the affluent, the forces of inflation that are expected to be unleashed will hurtal sections, particularly the poor and the middle classes.

—PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA with S.N. VASUKI and SURAJEET DAS GUPTA t)—feels at it will

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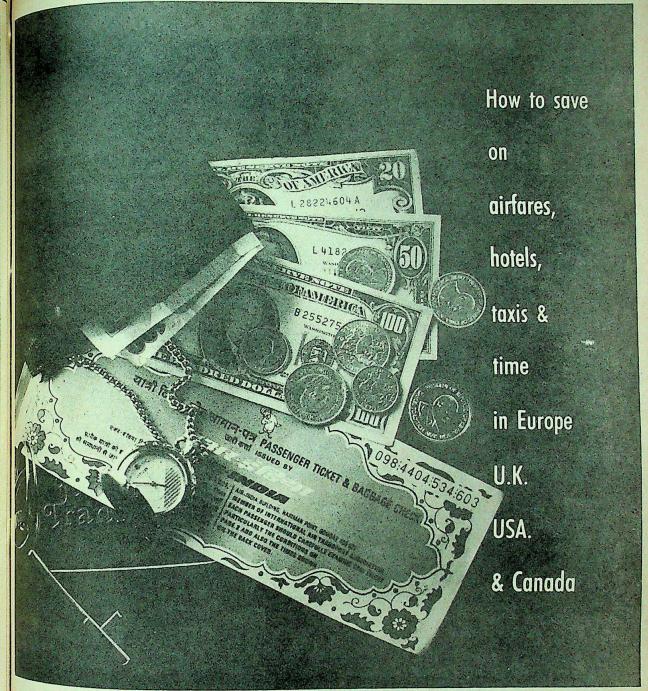
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CARGO CONSTRAINTS

IRLIFTING cargo out of India has become a major headache for the country's national carrier Air India. Inadequate availability of aircraft is causing delays in the movement of consignments which in turn is resulting in many exporters reneging on their commitments to buyers abroad. Currently there is a massive uncleared stock of garments meant for Europe and the US.

However, a solution to the problem may soon be on hand: Air India, it is reliably learnt, recently struck a deal with certain Gulf operators to move some 1,000 tonnes of cargo every month. Apart from Delhi and Bombay, cargo will also be lifted from Madras and Calcutta. This should alleviate to some extent the imbalances in the flow of goods in and out of India. While this move should ease hardships caused to exporters in the short run, the introduction of four Boeing 747-400 Combis by Air India in the near future is expected to take care of the longer-term constraints in airlifting cargo out of the country.

A NEW TWIST

IRST there was one. Then there were two. And today there are so many that one has lost count of the number of caramel-coated chocolate toffees called Eclairs that are fooding Indian stores. Consequence: the original producer of the now-virtually-generic product going by that name, Cadbury's, has decided to literally give a new twist to its selling strategy. It is going to test-market a new caramel-chocolate offee called Twist in Tamil Nadu this month. As the name suggests, the toffee will have a wavy swirl on the coating. And Cadbury's has designed a new mauve and yellow wrapper to differentiate Twist from the familiar orange and brown paper wrapped Eclairs.

IN THE AIR

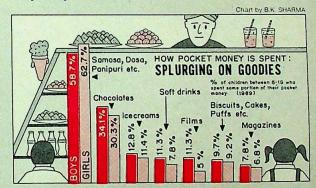
MERICAN aerospace giant Boeing is tipped to hire Indian Public Affairs Network (IPAN), the public relations subsidiary of leading advertising agency Hindustan Thompson Associates (HTA), to coordinate its public relations activities in the country. Besides IPAN, two other agencies— Good Relations, the associate of the Tatas' Taj hotels group and Profile, a wing of Trikaya Grey—made presentations to Being executives visiting the capital last month. What diached the deal in favour of IPAN was that HTA's foreign associate J. Walter Thompson is owned by the same group which owns Hill & Knowlton, the world's largest public relations organisation which has received a mandate from bocing to handle its public relations world-wide. And to make hings simpler, Rajiv Desai, who heads IPAN, used to be a Consultant with Hill & Knowlton in Chicago. With Boeing's Pincipal rival Airbus Industrie under a cloud after the recent A320 crash in Bangalore, the US company obviously intends Acpping up efforts to sell its aircraft to India.

EXPANSION PLANS

HE Rs 225-crore Onida group of companies is planning to embark on a diversification spree following the roaring success of its colour television sets and video the group recently decided to get into the manufacture of a things, refrigerators and home appliances. And that's not all. Success and ketchups.

CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

RBAN Indian children between six and 19 years of age receive as much as Rs 500 crore a year as pocket money. This is one of the revelations made by a study conducted last year by Pathfinders, the market research associate of



advertising agency Lintas. The study—based on interviews with 4,400 children belonging to households with monthly incomes of Rs 1,500 or more—reveals that most of the children spend their pocket money on food, soft drinks, films and magazines (see chart). Some other findings: more than half of the children interviewed do not save any portion of their pocket money and almost 30 per cent receive monthly amounts varying between Rs 50 and Rs 26.

PUBLIC SECRET

ACK in May 1988, the Government appointed a 20member official committee headed by Abid Hussainformer Planning Commission member and present Indian ambassador to the US-to review the implementation of the textile policy of June 1985. The committee's report entitled "Textile Industry in the '90s-Restructuring with a Human Face", which was submitted to the Textile Ministry on February 1 this year, is curiously being treated like a top secret document. The report itself suggests that a public debate be conducted on a number of issues relating to the revival of ailing textile units and promotion of cloth consumption in the country. A wag in Udyog Bhavan claims that bureaucrats in the ministry would prefer to keep the Hussain committee report under wraps as that would save them the bother of replying to the innumerable questions that would be raised in Parliament once the report is made public. Talk about an open Government.

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- WHEN DO YOU WISH YOUR COURIER WAS DHL?-

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YOUR SWISS ASSOCIATE IS MAD AT YOU

BECAUSE HE JUST LOST A MAJOR ENGINEERING CONTRACT

> BECAUSE HE COULDN'T MAKE HIS PRESENTATION

BECAUSE YOUR PROPOSAL DIDN'T REACH YESTERDAY

BECAUSE YOUR COURIER WASN'T DHL.

-THAT'S WHEN. -

BECAUSE DHL HAS MORE OFFICES WORLDWIDE THAN ANY OTHER COURIER, YOU'RE IN SAFE HANDS ALL THE WAY.

WORLDWIDE EXPRESS DHL THE COURIER DIVISION OF ARFAEIGHT LEMTE

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POTATO CHIPS

Crackling Challenge

Stiff competition as many companies enter the market

THE potato chips party's over. It's time for a bitter battle. Aggressive marketing is the name of the game; be only route to survival. The Rs 400rore potato chips making industry in be country will never be the same

Five years ago, it was a different ball rame. There were only a few players in

Yet, this is barely the tip of the iceberg. Reason: the market for branded chips is barely 10 per cent (around Rs 40 crore) of the total market. The rest comes from the unorganised sector, comprising small shops and halwais.

And the bad news is that there are too many contenders for the small slice of the market. Competition has particu-

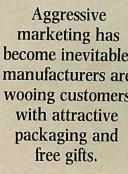
three years ago. However, it was forced to stop production within a year after incurring losses of as much as Rs 8 crore. Similarly, the Delhi-based Greenfield Processed Foods, which manufactures Wonder chips, found that its sales had virtually halved after the introduction of Binnie's last year by Jagatjit Industries Ltd (JIL).

Though some brands have disappeared from the market, the brittle competition has not forced companies to walk out of the business. At least not as yet. Instead potato chips producers are keeping themselves occupied, formulating strategies which could enable them to gain an edge over their rivals. And

they are hoping the market will continue to expand at the pace it has in recent years.

JIL for one has decided to meet the Pepsi challenge head-

marketing has become inevitable: manufacturers are wooing customers with attractive packaging and



on. Along with a high-profile sales promotion campaign, the company recently also offered consumers a free glass tumbler for every two packs of Binnie's

chips. This, claim company sources, has helped JIL step up sales by 15 per cent. As part of its aggressive campaign, it has also introduced rippled potato chips in four new flavours last fortnight.

Pepsi, on the other hand, is pushing its products by organising carnivals and magic shows for children in the capital. Vans stocked with Hostess chips move from colony to colony, and buyers are given tickets for on-the-spot raffles. Lucky winners receive bicycles as prizes. Not to be outdone, Uncle Chipps is offering free key-chains with each packet.

With so many competitors in the market, companies are spending more and more on marketing. For instance, Amrit Agro is doubling its advertising budget for this year to Rs 60 lakh. After the sensational success of JIL's "Humko Binnie's Mangta" campaign, it recently launched another campaign on television



branded potato chips segment, like old'n'Krisp. Profits were good and the oing pretty easy. But now all that has anged. Over the past year or so, a host companies have jumped on to the blps bandwagon. And last month, mpetition crackled with the entry of controversial multinational giant PiFoods Pvt Ltd and its Hostess brand chips, followed by Aloos which is anulactured by the Kanpur-based genic Foods Ltd.

Taking on the new entrants are blished bigwigs like Binnie's and chipps, besides Gold'n'Krisp. garetrying to woo customers in a big y through an elaborate marketing alegy: attractive packaging, exotic urs and, of course, free gifts. The ng in the market-place is a direct equence of the growth of the hity's branded potato chips marata Whopping 30 per cent a year.

larly intensified in northern Indiawhere as many as 20 manufacturers are located because of the availability of good quality potatoes in the region. As a result of the speed at which new manufacturers have entered the fray industry observers are beginning to wonder whether a crunch—not literally—may be in the offing.

Says Vikram Bajaj, managing director, Amrit Agro, makers of Uncle Chipps: "Too many people thought there was a lot of money in this business. But they were mistaken. So, a shake-out is inevitable." Adds Asim Ghosh, Pepsi's co-managing director: "Only companies with superior quality products will survive this competition." Already there are indications that some producers have crumbled under the pressure of competition.

For instance, Indian Organic Chemicals Ltd introduced Nik Nak in Bombay

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RURAL WINDOW BY MURAD ALI BAIG

and the press. The budget: a substantial Rs 1.7 crore. Even a new entrant like Black Diamond Beverages, based in Calcutta, spends as much as 5 per cent of its sales turnover on advertising its brand of chips, Fun Munch.

However, not all potato chips companies can afford such hefty advertising support. As a result they are turning to alternative marketing strategies. The makers of Wonder, for instance, are planning a door-to-door campaign in Delhi. The company is also offering retailers a 16-per cent trade margin which is 1 per cent higher than that offered by the others. Says Vijay Tandon, marketing manager, Greenfield Processed Foods: "This is the only way to maintain our market share. We can't afford to spend a lot of money on advertising."

Ambitious Foods, which manufactures Frenz, has introduced a smaller and cheaper packet (price: Rs 1.50) to woo the lower end of the market. And Prem Nath Monga Foods and Beverages—which pioneered the sales of branded chips in the country—has reduced both the weight and price of Gold'n'Krisp packets in order to gain a competitive edge. Black Diamond is to soon introduce a 200-gram packet of Fun Munch to cater to the burgeoning hotels and bars market. Says company Director S.R. Goenka: "There is a new market here which is waiting to be tapped."

Companies are also spreading their geographical coverage. For instance, after its incredible success in the north, JIL last fortnight launched Binnie's in Bombay, a market which has so far been dominated by the unorganised sector. Similarly, Wonder is moving out of metros to cities like Patna. Having asserted its grip on the Calcutta market, Fun Munch is now moving to the Northeast. Similarly, Indian Organic is seriously looking at the possibilities of exporting potato chips to west Asia, Singapore and Japan.

Though most manufacturers see the branded chips market continuing to grow rapidly, there are some who see a none-too-bright future for the industry. Says Bombay-based food processing consultant Shyam Pherwani: "I am very sceptical about the success of packaged potato chips. And I would not recommend this business to any of my clients."

But sceptics like Pherwani may be proved wrong. For at least some manufacturers, if not all, are expecting their returns to become crisper.

-SURAJEET DAS GUPTA with bureau reports

The Cane Caliphs

RIVING through north India in March is pleasing to the senses. The winter has lost its edge and the wind ripples through vivid yellow mustard blossoms that rise above the green of maturing wheat fields. Water gushes forth from pumps and surges through canals, and fertile land is exposed with the harvesting of sugar cane over.

Cane is the principal crop of western Uttar Pradesh, many times more valuable than any other. During the past decade, cane farmers have prospered with the state Government offering generous prices—higher than the fair prices announced by the Agricultural Prices Commission.

There is little visible evidence of this new wealth. Farmers look poor. Vijay Pal Singh, a Jat farmer, is fairly typical. In his shabby clothes he hardly looks like he could afford a second tractor. He proudly showed off his newly-built house in his village Navipur. His four brothers too have built their own houses. Two-thirds of his 14 acres is under cane. He complained: "Prices of wheat are falling and potato has taken a beating, Farming is risky. We don't get secure salaries with D.A. like you city folk."

But cane is wonderful—Singh explained why. Even after allowing for transport costs and lower prices given by gur and khandsari crushers, he would earn over Rs 8,000 an acre. Costs come to a mere Rs 2,000 an acre for the first planting, and less thereafter. The harvesting labour is free as workers are happy with the cane tops they can take home.

"The Government has failed to give us the prices we were expecting, but the extra Rs6 a quintal will get me about Rs1,000 an acre. Anyway now we have our leaders in Delhi and Lucknow, and they will force the mills to crush all we want to supply. If the mills lose money, government banks will have to finance them. If prices of sugar rise, gur and khandsari units will pay us more and I will give them all my cane. I'm not bothered about any contract." Singh declared.

One man's gain is another's loss. This year, three million (or 3.3 per cent) of India's 92 million cultivators



Vijay Pal Singh (right) with his uncle

should produce 205 million tonnes of cane worth Rs 7,000 crore—over 20 per cent of the value of the foodgrain grown in India. These farmers, in the rich, irrigated, cane-growing areas, are indeed fortunate. For each one of them, there will be 30 farmers in other areas who will have to pay higher prices for their gur and sugar, to say nothing of the 187 million inhabitants of the cities.

The money from cane is like honey to flies, attracting politicians, who have a sticky finger in every aspect of the industry. Leaders like Devi Lal, Ajit Singh, Sharad Joshi and M.S. Tikait are deeply involved in the cane-growers' interests. Few fightfor 70 per cent of the farmers in non-irrigated, dryland areas that grow coarse grain, and have to buy even their wheat and rice.

"Life," says Singh, "is very paradoxical. When we had our leader Charan Singh on the gaddi 10 years ago, farm prices had crashed. Since then things have been good even if Congressmen didn't understand our difficulties. Now, we have a government committed to us. No one will dare harm our interests." That should warm the cockles of the National Front's heart, even as it sends shivers down the spine of the 89 million-odd non-cane growers of India, and leaves in the mouths of the rest of us a bitter taste.

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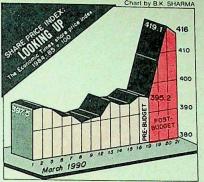
THE MARKETS **Bullish Phase**

Buoyant post-budget mood

TAD the country's stock-markets sunk into a deep stupor on the eve of the budget? That's what it ppears. Otherwise it becomes difficult pexplain the sudden spurt in share ralues in the days immediately followof the presentation of the budget proposals on March 19. That evening itself, he sensitive index of the Bombay Stock ichange (BSE) jumped by a whopping 30 points.

It's not as if the capital markets iways behave in a rational manner. or, how does one reconcile the buoyant good that is currently prevailing with he fact that the budget has proposed the mosition of additional taxes of Rs 800 more on the corporate sector? The apparent mystery can be resolved to some gtent. Investors were obviously expectng a much stiffer dose of taxes than that has been actually suggested. Thus, bey felt relieved when the budget was mounced.

If Dalal Street was quite upbeat, the



response of industry spokesmen was mixed. The president of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Raunaq Singh, waxed eloquent about the finance minister showing "extreme ingenuity" in reducing the budget deficit. The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India chief and BJP supporter Viren Shah, however, blasted the budget proposals claiming that they would spur inflation. Shah also criticised the move to do away with the investment allowance.

But the stock-markets blissfully ignored such differences of opinion. The Economic Times all-India share price index, which had touched a low of 390.4 on March 8 and had hovered around 395

on the eve of the budget, shot up to 407.7 during post-budget trading and rose further to 419.1 the following day. This level compares favourably with the peak of 442.9 reached in January.

A number of budget proposals were welcomed. These include the reduction in the basic corporation tax rate from 50 per cent to 40 per cent and the withdrawal of Section 115J of the Income Tax Act which prescribes a minimum 30-per cent tax on book profits of companies. The finalisation of an equity-linked savings scheme is also expected to boost investor sentiments.

The reduction in corporation tax rates is likely to increase the prices of shares of companies manufacturing consumer goods. Reason: such companies have relatively low capital investments and are hence not affected by the removal of investment allowance benefits. Thus, the profits of these companies are likely to go up on account of the lower tax rates.

Another reason for the sudden and sharp rise in scrip values was that the share markets were in a highly 'undersold' position before March 19 and trading volumes had shrunk considerably. Thus, the announcement of the budget saw the floodgates being opened wide.

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thok Leyland 99.00	69.50	73.00	1.50	_	Indrol	. 246.25	161.25	182.50	13.75	+
Landied Cement 202 00	325.00	376.50	27.50	+	Ingersoll-Rand			235.00	10.00	+
255 00	207.50	231.25	15.00	+	ITC		47.75	61.75	7.75	
	35.00	37.00	1.50	_	J.K. Synthetics	67.00	50.00	54.00	1.00	+
79 AULO	355.00	392.50	6.25	+	Kinetic Engineering		130.00	135.00	2.50	-
	617.50	722.50	90.00	+	Kirloskar Cummins		65.00	75.50	0.50	+
	62.50	77.00	12.50	+	KSB Pumps	215.00	190.00	215.00	15.00	+
Marpur 155.00	120.00	134.00	8.00	+	Larsen & Toubro	85.00	57.00	63.00	1.00	+
lita lista 93.75	85.00	93.75	1.25	+	Lipton	.112.00	83.00	95.00	8.50	+
Jombay Duci 66.00	50.50	60.50	7.00	+	LML Ltd.	21.00	15.00	18.00	1.50	+
Wildonia I	173.00	187.00	4.50	+	Madura Coats	111.00	100.50	106.50	1.50	-
100ke Par 1 119.00	97.00	115.00	11.00	+	Mahindra & Mahindra	103.00	67.50	76.25	1.25	+
118.00	91.00	114.00	16.00	+*	Milk Food	280.00	200.00	230.00	22.50	+
Julia I. 1. 3020.00	2420.00	2880.0	205.00	+**	Motor Industries	1200,00	785:00	860.00	20.00	+
1 "MIA Dal	82.50	89.00	3.50	÷	Mukand Ltd.	. 157.00	127.00	134.00	1.50	+
1 dhamis 225.00	176.25	221.25	41.25	+	National Organic				60.00	+
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	87.50	102.50	6.50	+	Nirlon	22.00	14.00	16.50	nil	
1 William 56.00	45.50	54.00	7.00	+	Orkay Silk Mills	20.50	14.50	15.75	0.25	+
	51.75	54.00	1.00	+	Peico Electronics	32.50	24.00	28.25	2.50	+
isoris 65.25 isolex Cables 283.50	58.00	63.00	2.00	+	Pfizer	.113.75	72.50	80.00	2.50	+
Cables 88.00	77.75	85.50	2.50	+	Premier Auto	74.50	53.50	58.00	1.00	+
Packer Cables 88.00 Ind Specialities 282.50 Saware Nylon 69.00	202.50	270.00	55.00	+	Ranbaxy	.107.50	86.25	100.00	10.00	+
Savare Nylon 69.00	101.75	127.00	20.00	+	Raymond		70.00	82.50	7.50	+
Strapping 35.00	49.00	52.00	2.00	+	Reliance Industries		50.00	55.00	3.00	+
1 64.70	44.00	48.50	3.00	+	Siemens India	.120.00	96.00	106.00	3.00	+
M	155.00	185.00	8.75	+	Shaw Wallace	92.00	65.00	69.50	1.50	-
Manufacture 125.00	106.00	118.50	10.25	+	Shriram Fibres	71.00	51.25	58.00	nil	
	205.00	251.25	32.50	+	SKF Bearings	1670.00	1240.00	1390.00	100.00	+
1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	960.00	1220.00	160.00	+*	SPIC	62.00	50.75	59.75	6.25	+
	133.75	160.00			Tata Steel		103.25	114.00	5.75	+
1660.00 172.50 1660.00 172.50	101.00	116.00	8.50		Telco		110.00	118.00	3.00	+
	19.80	23.00	1.20		Vam Organic		132.50	145.00	7.50	+
organic 49.50	35.25	44.00	6.25		Videocon Int			145.00	30.00	+
1 58.75	47.00	54.00	4.00		Voltas		63.00	70.00	1.00	+
Organic 49.50 San Rayon 58.75 Longond ** Ex-right	84.00	95.00	5.00		Wimco		16.75	20.75	2.75	+

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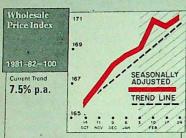
			TT Selling Rotes Rs	Buying Ites Rs
COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	E.S.	F
Australia	Dollar	1	12 9525	12.8085
Austria				142.0983
Bahrain				45.0227
Bangladesh				51.8444
Canada				14.5370
Denmark	Kroner	1	2.6533	2.6248
Egypt	Pound	1	6.7000	6.5802
France	Franc	1	3.0534	2.9762
Hong Kong	. Dollar	1	2.2122	2.1892
Indonesia	Rupiah	.100	0.9519	0.9369
Iran	Rial	100	25.5368	25.2559
Italy	Lira	.100	1.3763	1.3611
Japan	Yen	.100	11.3122	11.0254
Kenya	.Shilling	1	0.8003	0.7913
Kuwait				57.0288
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.3331	6.2658
Mauritius				1.1599
Nepal				0.5951
Netherlands				8.9107
Pakistan				0.8066
Singapore				9.0825
Spain				0.1577
Sri Lanka				0.4277
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These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited. New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 23.3.90 .

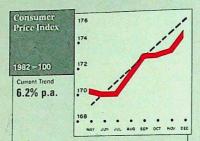
THE ECONOMY MONITIPED Arya Samaj Foundation Chennal and oCangotri

The data, that still largely refers to the weeks preceding the announcement of the 1990-91 budget proposals, indicates the trepidation and uncertainty with which the budget was expected. Most people were apprehending a hefty dose of new taxes and the overall mood was downbeat. However, against such dire expectations, the budget proposals came as a relief when they were finally announced. Though taxes were increased, they were much less than what had been anticipated.

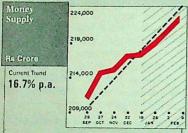
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



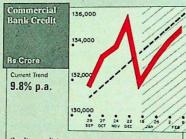
Prices remained stable in the period before the budget-but cost push inflationary pressures may be created by the tough budget.



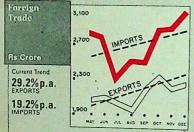
Consumer prices increased last month at an annualised 9 per cent rate above the long-term



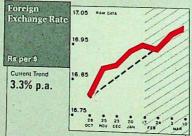
Money supply increased sharply generating inflationary pressures-but the long-term trend is moderate.



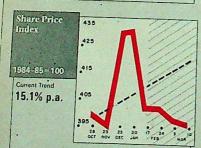
Credit conditions were very easy over the last fortnight, but the long-term trend is too restrictive.



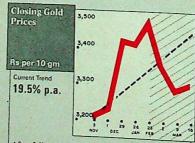
Imports jumped up last month by a much larger amount than exports-worsening the balance of trade.



There were no significant changes in the exchange rate of the US dollar in the period preceding the budget.



The stock-market wavered with uncertainty expecting the worst from the budget-but brightened after the budget.



After falling sharply in the two-week run up to the budget, gold prices plummeted with the abolition of the Gold Control Act.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of February 1990

	% Growth
Jute Textile Machinery	
Sewing Machine	46.00
Cycles	41 70
1 apioca,	
Groundnut Oticake	
Gingelly Oil	
Arhar	
Pete Crude & Natural Gas	
Gingelly Seed	1 20
Coconut Oil	
Linseed	3.48
Moong	3.28
Power-Driven Pumps	
Bajra	3.10
Tea	3.03
Fish	2.55
Bulk Drugs	2.49
Rape & Mustard Seeds	2.47
Column Futnested Oil	2.46
Solvent Extracted Oil	2.31
Barley	2.09
Turmeric	2.07
Synthetic Fibres	
Copra	
Gur	
Linseed Oil	
Tractors	
Art Silk & Artificial Fabrics	
Handloom & Powerloom Products	
Nylon/Terene and Mixed cloth	0.88
Urad	0.87
Cement	0.81
Mustard Oil	0.70
Cotton Yarn	0.47
Rice	0.31
Vanaspati	0.21
Groundnut Oil	0.12
Electricity.	0.05
Phosphatic Fertilisers	0.00
Pesticides & Insecticides	0.00
Board	0.00
Paper	0.00
Tubes	0.00
Tyres	0.00
Coir Yarn	0.00
Coir Yarn	

Of the 136 series considered, 40 of them with a total weight of 31,455 had a positive growth and 23 of them with a total weight of 23.124 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS	
1990	1989
Coal Thousand Tonnes, February19350	19520
Saleable Steel Thousand Tonnes, February	778.9
Cement Thousand Tonnes. February3785	3664
Petroleum Crude Thousand Tonnes, February2674	2507
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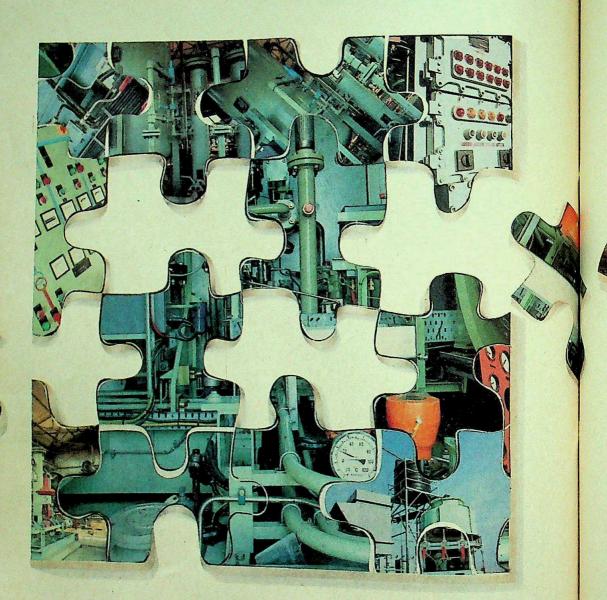
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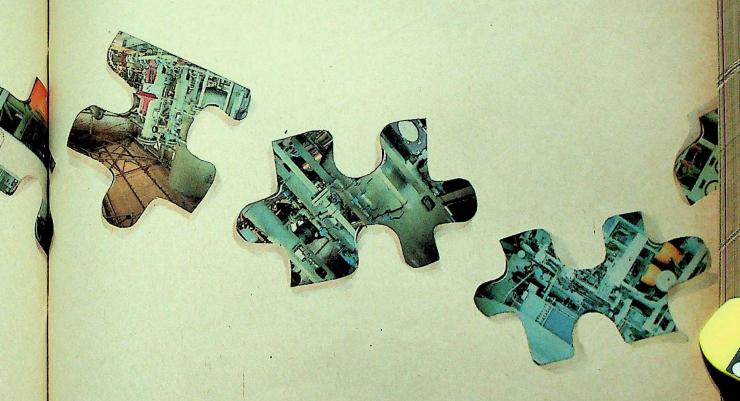
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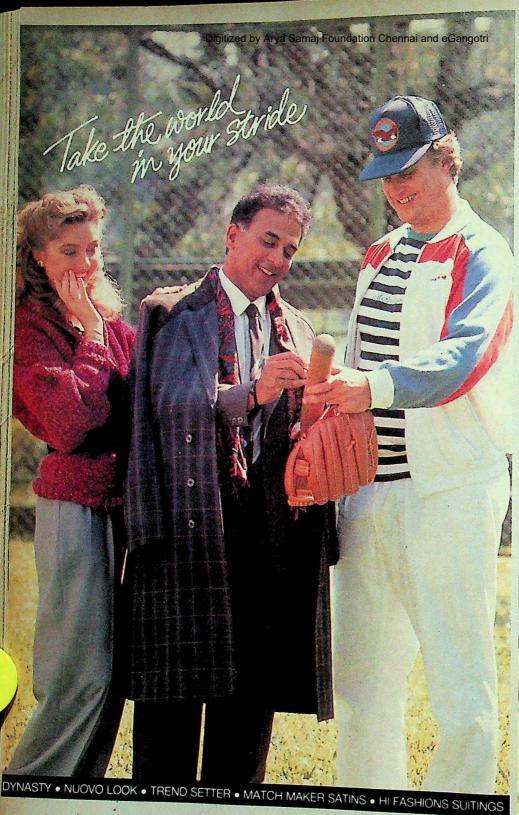
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VING DEVDASIS

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Ritualistic Revival

forts to rejuvenate a discredited tradition

AITH often defies logic. And blinded by such faith are five young women of Orissa who want to be initiated as derdasis at the famous Puri temple. Withouly one devdasi left at the temple, hetradition is close to becoming extinct. These women want to ensure it is kept abre for they believe that to "surrender plord Jagannath is the ultimate bliss".

The devdasi tradition is today banned by states like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, but not Orissa. Critics maintain that devdasis are exploited and often forced into prostitution. They cite the desertion of devdasis from the Puri temple itself as proof of this. Till 1954, there were 30-odd devdasis. Today there s just one 70-year-old woman named Kokiloprava; the rest have fled.

Yet. temple priests claim that accordingto the scriptures, devdasis performed the vital role of dancing every morning and singing Geet-Govinda before the deity every night. Says Guru Mohanty, the temple administrator: "It's a tradition worth keeping alive." Temple

five have sent in formal applications to the temple administrator.

It was, in fact, the 12-member temple administration committee-which has three government nominees including the district magistrate on the boardthat set the ball rolling. In 1985 it decided to recruit new devdasis, and spread the word. Last year, the five women applied.

This set off a fierce debate as some temple functionaries believed the right to become a devdasi is hereditary while others disagreed. Eventually, it was decided the aspirants would acquire this

Lo serve the Lord is the passport to heaven. To surrender to him is the ultimate bliss."

SNEHALATA PATIL



The sole ambition of my life is to realise Lord Jagannath within myself."

KRUSHNAPRIYA JENA

athorities point out that herules for rituals in the Pun temple, codified in 1954, sanctioned the coninuation of devdasis.

The five women who hish to become devdasis varying gounds, but are driven the same religious im-Nges. Kajal Jena, in her 1030s, is a craft instruc-

in the state-run Home Economics Taining Centre at Bhubaneswar. She her ultimate goal is to become a want of the Lord. Says she: "I see habhu every day." Krushnapriya Jena Cuttack's Bodero village is just in rleens. And her aim in life is to "rea-

am treated like a casual worker-when I don't come to the temple, I don't get paid."

lise the lord within myself'.

The other latter day Meeras are Snehalata Patil, who is one of the field staff in a local voluntary organisation, Jyotsna Rani Swain of Cuttack's Barabihanda village, and Banalata Acharya, a primary school teacher in Puri. All right if adopted by Kokiloprava.

But Kokiloprava—a devdasi since the age of nine—is in no mood to oblige. She has little faith in the temple administration. "I am treated like a casual worker-no work, no pay," says she. On days when the aged Kokiloprava still drags herself to the temple to sing before the deity, she is paid Rs 9.58. Otherwise she gets nothing. Though the Orissa Government pays her a monthly pension of Rs 200, Kokiloprava finds it difficult to make ends meet, leaving her dependent on her adopted son, Damodar Das. And it is Damodar who refuses to let his mother adopt the five girls. Asks he: "What if they claim property rights too?'

Still, the temple authorities are confident of coaxing Kokiloprava to adopt the

girls. Says the administrator: "Procedural delays have bogged down our efforts. But we are still at it." For good measure he adds: "They would be paid more than what Kokiloprava gets.'

A few years ago, Kokiloprava had adopted two girls who wanted to become devdasis. But after six months both upped

and left. No one cares to admit why. The five aspirants today believe that "to serve the lord is the passport to heaven". Should they become devdasis, it would be interesting to find out some years from now, whether they reached their destination. -RUBEN BANERJEE GOLD SMUGGLERS

Taking to the Air

Airline staff become favourite carriers

CENE 1: Frankfurt airport. The date: January 23, 1990. As the crew board an Air India flight from Paris to Bombay via Frankfurt, they notice that the roof panel outside the pilot's cabin has given way. The reason is soon evident. It has collapsed under the weight of gold concealed above it. The value of the find: Rs 2.16 crore.

Scene 2: Bombay airport. The date: February 19, 1990. Officers of the Air Intelligence Unit of the Bombay Air C. stoms keep a close watch on the movements of a private cargo airliner owned by Trans Mediterranean Airways—Lebanon. They notice a jeep belonging to the company leaving the taxis standimmediately after the arrival of the aircraft. An inspection of the jeep soon after reveals a prize catch: 580 gold bars weighing 68 kg. The total value of the catch: Rs 2.47 crore.

For customs officials, such catches are becoming familiar. Increasingly, gold smugglers are taking to the air and in a big way. In 1987, the customs seized

730 kg of gold being smuggled by air. In 1988, the figure shot up to as much as 1,224 kg. And last year, it rose further to 1.530 kg. Says A.K. Raha, additional collector (airport): "Airlines are becoming an easy means for smuggling anything into the country."

What is more worrying is that a sizeable chunk of the gold is being

smuggled through Air India's aircraft or through its staff. In the past two years, the airline's staff members have been arrested in connection with gold smuggling worth Rs 18 crore. And while in 1988 the airline was involved in 14 of the 21 cases of air smuggling cases detected, the number jumped uplast year to 21 out of 29 cases.

Customs authorities first woke up to the gravity of the problem in November 1987. That month, Air India's Deputy Chief Air Hostess Madhumita Bakshi



was arrested at Jeddah Airport with gold bars in her possession. To prevent such smuggling, the airline acquired on deputation a senior IPS official from the Maharashtra cadre to supervise security arrangements.

But that hardly seems to have dis-

commands in the international market. And if smuggling by sea is profitable, it's even more lucrative to bring in gold by commercial flights.

The reckoning is simple. To defray the expenses of a journey from the Gulf and still make a sizeable profit, a boat must carry more than 10 jackets of gold (one jacket holds 10 kg). And if the

consignment is seized, the loss is that much greater. By air, on the other hand, far smaller consignments can be sent. And even if the consignment is seized, the loss will not put them out of business.

Favourite couriers nowadays are airline staff. Sometimes they do it on their own account. More often, they are used by smugglers who are based

in the Gulf. Explains Raha: "Some smugglers oblige some airline staffers based temporarily in the Gulf. And later, when the smugglers ask for a return favour, they cannot refuse for fear of blackmail."

But Raha is hopeful that the customs can turn the tables on the smuggler. Says he: "The Government of India pays more than the smugglers."

So far, though, the glitter of gold has been far more irresistible.

-RAGHU NANDAN DHAR

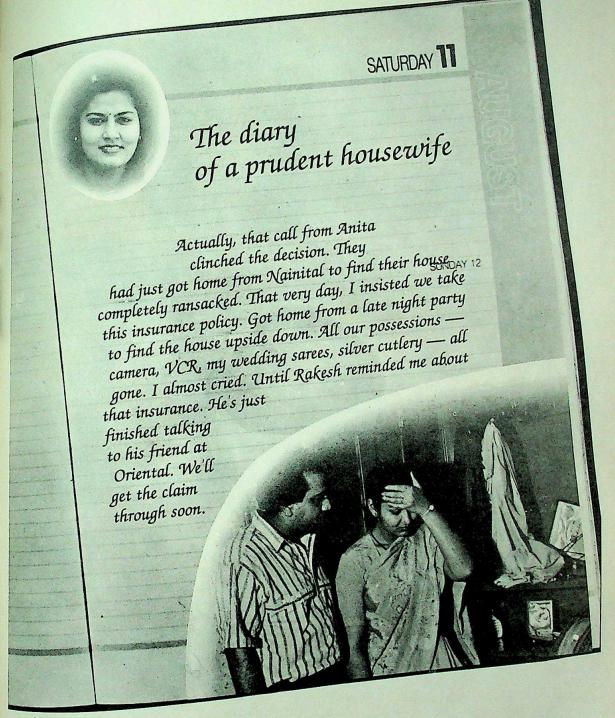
MIR-INDIA

Over the past two years, several employees of Air India have been arrested for being involved in smuggling gold to the tune of Rs 18 crore.

suaded smugglers. In recent times, several airline staffers have been arrested either while attempting to remove gold from an aircraft or while loading it into a vehicle on the tarmac.

Much of the gold is smuggled from the Gulf. The principal point of entry into India is Bombay, which handles 52 per cent of the international flights touching down in the country.

The reason for gold smuggling is obvious: the price of the yellow metal in India is 18 per cent higher than what it



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Gas victims' victory rally in Bhopal; Mohan Lila (above): Yasoda with daughters: faulty implementation

BHOPAL GAS VICTIMS

Partial Relief

Controversy dogs scheme

EGINNING end-June, something unprecedented in legal history will Itake place in Bhopal. More than 78,000 people, who have not claimed damages for the 1984 Bhopal gas leak disaster, will start getting Rs 200 a month for the next three years as part of the Rs 360-crore interim relief scheme for victims of the tragedy.

The beneficiaries of the schemeannounced by the Union Government last fortnight-are all the 4.84 lakh residents of the 36 severely gas-affected municipal wards of the city. The scheme's grand sweep encompasses even those who have not filed claims. Take the case of Mohan Lila, a partner of Lilason Breweries (turnover: Rs 10 crore), who along with his five family members will get Rs 1,200 a month. Says he embarrassedly: "We were not affected, so we had not filed a claim. It is funny that they will be sending me money without my asking for it.'

In normal circumstances, the criterion for such compensation is the damage to health suffered by the victims. But if that had been the case, less than two lakh people in the 36 wards would have been entitled to interim relief. Moreover, activist groups had raised a rumpus against the fairness of the medical checkup carried out by the Madhya Pradesh Government, leading to a public acknowledgement of the 'deficiencies' of the medical documentation by the Centre. In fact, on his last visit to the city in January, Prime Minister V.P. Singh had announced the waiver of the pre-condi-



tion of medical examination to cut red tape and pay money to the victims quickly.

Reasons Petroleum and Chemicals Minister M.S. Gurupadaswamy: "The decision to cover all residents of the 36 wards has been taken because we feel that all those exposed to the gas have suffered." Again, restricting the scheme to only those who have claimed damages might have weakened the Government's case against the Union Carbide Corporation (ucc) that everyone living in the affected areas had suffered.

Obviously, paying money to all residents of the 36 wards was the easy way out for the Government. But the populist measure is likely to create a controversy on other fronts. For one, the demarcation of wards is an administrative concept and the toxic methyl iso-cyanate (MIC) gas claimed victims depending on the direction of the wind. Medical documentation corroborates this fact, revealing that at least 6 per cent of the

victims-about 12,000 people-live outside these 36 wards.

Says BJP leader Bharat Chaturvedi: "The decision to restrict the interim relief to 36 wards is a grave injustice to victims living in other areas." A clamour in the remaining 20 wards of the city is only to be expected. Says Kiran Deshmukh, a gas victim who is not covered by the scheme: "While people across the road have been declared gasaffected, we have been left out." Complains Yasoda, whose husband died in the gas leak: "They are practically tak ing our money and giving it to those who have no claim on it." According to a former Congress(I) MP from Bhopal K.N. Pradhan, since the Mic had affected the drinking water supply of the city and its environment, the entire city should be declared gas-affected.

As a placatory move, Madhya Pradesh's Minister for Gas Relief, Babulal Gaur has now promised to get interim relief for victims living in other areas of

SATURDAY 25

The diary of a prudent executive

It's still difficult holding my pen, though the pain is gone now. The doctor says the plaster on my knee and arm should be off in a week. What a relief! I'll be back to work soon. Thank God for that insurance I took. The man from Oriental was here today. Says I will get my compensation cheque as soon as the doctor certifies me fit and I submit my claim papers — as simple

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the town. Says he emphatically: "All residents of this city have suffered mental trauma and economic loss." But Gaur's measure will not be an adequate solution. Understandably, the real victims-whose kith and kin died in the leak-feel that if all residents of the city, currently estimated at one million, are covered by the scheme, it deprives them of their due share of the compensation. Says Chhoti Bee, whose husband died in the leak: "Why should everyone get the money? Only those who have suffered should get it.

Meanwhile, even the payment of money to the people in 36 wards will pose a problem of logistics. Several loose ends are yet to be tied up. The Union Government has simply declared that money will be paid every month through banks. But officials in the Gas Relief Department at Bhopal are still wondering how they will identify the beneficiaries.

The population of these 36 wards in 1984 was estimated at 4.84 lakh. But a survey commissioned by the state Government after the leak had projected a population of 5.75 lakh. Asks an official: "How will we prove who was living in that area at that time and who was not? And what about the people who have shifted houses or migrated since then?' Preparation of the records for these beneficiaries will alone entail an expenditure of Rs 1.75 crore.

Nevertheless, the decision to pay interim relief has been by and large welcomed. Following the announcement, women under the umbrella of the Gas Peedit Mahila Udyog Sangathan brought out a massive victory rally. Said Rashida Bee, a gas victim and activist of the sangathan: "It will help poor victims face the protracted legal battle ahead."

Since the National Front Government has decided to reopen the Bhopal case (see INDIA TODAY, February 15), the interim relief will provide a majority of the victims, who are very poor, subsistence to face the trial. Instead of using the money deposited by the ucc (Rs 715 crore) with the Supreme Court, the Government is paying interim relief from its own coffers. Carbide has argued that payment of interim relief by it amounts to an admission of liability, a pre-judging of the case.

Now if Carbide is indicted, the amount can be deducted from the final compensation. If it is not, the expenditure incurred by the Government will be in keeping with its responsibility-particularly the role of legal guardian that it has acquired under the Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster Act. -N.K. SINGH

Gender Jam

Case of a curious marriage

HEN Tarulata, 33, underwent a sex-change operation in 1987 and became a man named Tarunkumar, it didn't just end up as another curious medical case. Instead, it has gone on to open an interesting judicial chapter.

Tarunkumar married 23-year-old Lila Chavda in December last year, culminating an intriguing five-year friendship. But Muljibhai Chavda, Lila's schoolteacher father, has gone to the Gujarat High Court, saying that it is a lesbian relationship and petitioning that the marriage be annulled. The unique



kumar's parents.

The couple claims that Muljibhai's real grouse is that because Lila eloped, he will not get a 'dowry' from the groom as is the custom in their community, Tarunkumar says that his sex-change was no surprise for those who knew him: "As a child I would don male clothes and play volleyball, football and even judo and karate with other boys. If I had the money I would have got myself operated during my teenage days."

The love affair began when Tarulata started going on the 1985 election campaign tour with her sister Chandraben Sharimali who was contesting on a Congress(I) ticket from Dasade in Surendranagar district. On tour, the two often stayed at Muljibhai's house in Patdi, a village near Dasade. There Tarulata and Muljibhai's daughter Lila met and a friendship developed. So inti-

mate did they become that Muljibhai once even quipped: "I should get Tarulata and Lila married."

Last August, Chandraben herself informed Muljibhai that Lila should be "guarded" from Tar-

Tarunkumar (left) and (below) marrying Lila Chavda: complex issues

writ petition contends that "Tarunkumar possesses neither the male organ nor any natural mechanism of cohabitation, sexual intercourse and procreation of children. Adoption of any unnatural mechanism does not create manhood and as such Tarunkumar is not a male." Muljibhai has called for criminal action under Section 377 (unnatural offences).

Says Muljibhai's lawyer, Mohammed Husen Bareija: "Even an impotent Hindu male can marry because impotency is no bar to his marriage. In this case Tarunkumar was not a Hindu male at the time of his birth." The court has issued notices to the respondents including Dr P.K. Bilvani who conducted the sex-change operation and the registrar of marriages asking them why the petition should not be admitted.

Tarunkumar and Lila are hurt by Muljibhai's action, but are prepared to fight it out. "There is nothing unusual about our relationship as we live like any married couple does. Even if the court declares our marriage null and void we shall continue to live together because we are emotionally attached to each other," assert the unemployed couple, who now live with Tarun-



unkumar. Then on, till she eloped in December, Lila said she was often beaten up by her father.

There have been instances of persons undergoing sex-transformation and then getting married. But rarely has such a marriage been challenged in court. This case poses difficult questions. Above all it entails the complex problem of defining a 'complete' man —UDAY MAHURKAR or woman.

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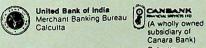
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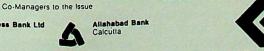
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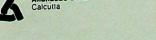
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DOORDARSHAN

Freedom Struggle

Government back-pedals on promise of autonomy

OORDARSHAN isn't really going anywhere: one foot may be on the accelerator but the other's on the brake. And freedom remains a mind-

One of the major campaign promises of the new Government was autonomy

for Doordarshan and AIR. And during the first few days it seemed it was already here. But soon, alarm bells began to ring.

Devi Lal's dramatic resignation last fortnight got only a few moments on the news. Anywhere else, the resignation of the second most powerful man in the nation would have triggered an avalanche of TV programmes. The carnage in Meham, hardly got an airing even though Doordarshan had been offered footage by independent producers. "When the nation is talking about Kashmir or Meham or wherever there are disturbances, where is Doordarshan?" asks TV producer Vinod Dua.

Since expectations of the present Government are high, many producers are disappointed by the fact that Doordarshan cameras don't seem to go where the action is. The scissors are back. Cen-

sorship is alive and snipping. Film director Saeed Mirza's programme on Kashmir for PTI-TV has been canned; Ramesh Sharma's film on Assam was found to be too inconvenient.

Controversial or inconvenient proposals seem to be getting shot down with alacrity: the impact of the events in East Europe on communism in India: a programme on tendu leaf, another on dams. Producer Bikram Singh's proposal for a programme on Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala's Disneyland was cold shouldered. Says Singh: "I see no sense of freedom among any of the officials dealing with current affairs."

Yet, greater impartiality in news coverage is evident, as is the palpably more tolerant atmosphere in Mandi House and Shastri Bhawan. "There is democratic dissent and a decided atmosphere of tolerance," says PTI-TV's chief producer Sashi Kumar.

But this is offset by the air of confusion and insecurity that prevails in Mandi House. Complains a senior Mandi House official: "At least the previous government was telling them what to do

directly. Now, it's indirect and oblique."

Kashmir seems to be the bottomline in the dilemma of what to show or not to show. "Autonomy means freedom, but with responsibility." says Information and Broadcasting Minister P. Upendra. "Ultimately freedom of expression can't go against the national interest.'

Anxiety over Kashmir is understandable but the suppression of news has its own pitfalls. Says B.G. Verghese, the inspiration behind the Prasar Bharati Bill: "Sensitive issues should not be overplayed...but suppression lowers credibility." Verghese is against the suppression of news because "the attitude of censorship will take over all the way down the line".

When the tempests of change blowing across East Europe and the Soviet Union breezed through Doordarshan,

the Government was not amused "What if the USSR showed the Azad Kashmir and JKLF flags flying over the buildings in Srinagar?" asked a bureaucrat. Said Upendra: "Present the news about Azerbaijan and Lithuania by all means, but we should not gloat overit ... VAJIT NINAN

you have to think of friendly nations."

Auto-censorship is back with a vengeance. Director Sudhir Misra was told by a Mandi House official to remove certain references to a debauched thakur in his serial Kab Tak Pukaroon because "V.P. Singhji and Chandra Shekharji would not like it". "What scares the hell out of me is the kind of people who censor it. Often they're no better than clerks," says Misra. Tipu Sultan's sword has also been sheathed due to pressure from the BIP.

The Government seems to have good intentions but is back-pedalling on autonomy. While current affairs have been increased to four times a day, the topics are on issues and not really on current events. "They are palming off features as current affairs," says Dua.

The deadline for autonomy is January 1991, when

the Broadcasting Corporation comes into being. But there are nervous qualms in the corridors of power about letting go. Says a senior official: "Having tasted the blood of power, it is difficult to be vegetarian." Explains Upendra: "The corporation will not be like a private organisation. Being the only medium available and funded by the state it is accountable to the nation."

Producer Ramesh Sharma feels autonomy is proving to be a Hobson's choice for the Government. "They'll be damned if they don't, and damned if they do." Some fear that giving autonomy to Doordarshan without cleansing it will prove disastrous. "The cure will be worse than the disease," says Sashi Kumar. "I hope we see the birth of a new morning and not a new night."

—MADHU JAIN

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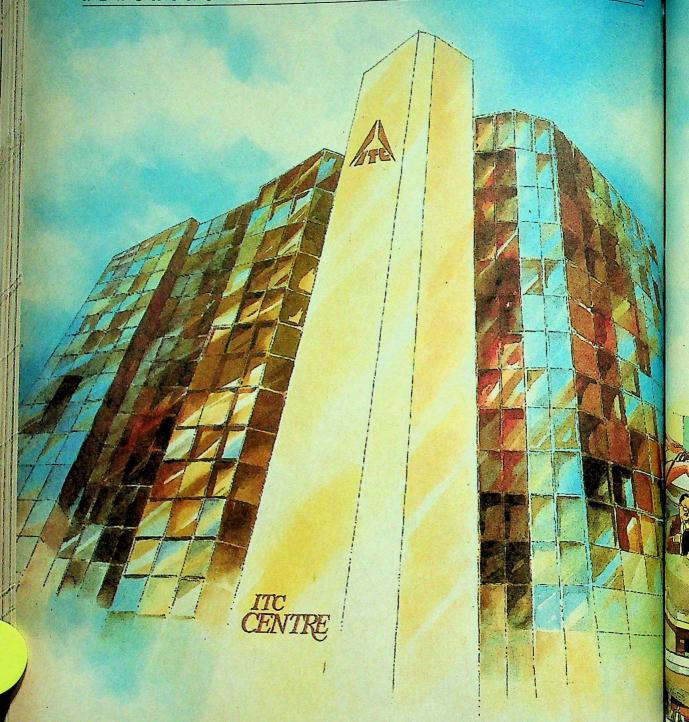


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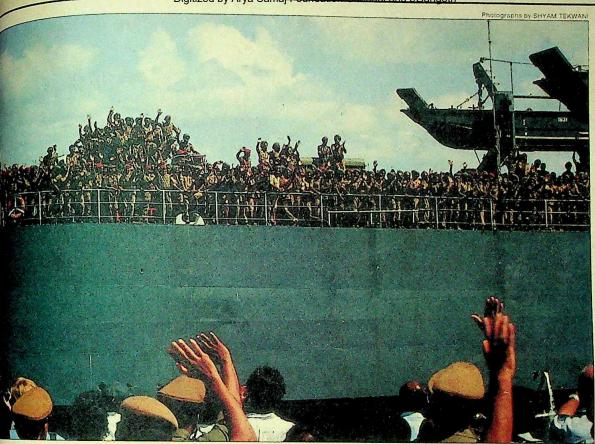
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SRI LANKA

Return of the Tigers

As the IPKF finally pulls out, the LTTE is back as undisputed overlords of the Tamil areas in the north and the east.

HE early morning sun glowed in the sky as the last batch of over 2,000 IPKF jawans in Trincomalee dup their bags and boarded the troopther INS Magar on March 24. As the anked by Indian Navy frigates

gan its journey to the tewell strains of auld syne played by the lankan armed forces, controversial chapter ^{ndian} diplomacy came

We came as a proud ce and are leaving as a d force," said IPKF mander Lt-General Kalkat as he joined

the last batch of PKF soldiers leave Sn Lankan shores

his troops on board. But among the weary Indian jawans, the predominant sentiment was of relief as they bid goodbye to the island, where for over two years they had been engaged in a gruelling bush war with LTTE militants. In the

process they'd seen 1,155 of their comrades killed and 2.984 wounded.

And for their efforts, they'd invited flak from both Indian dissenters and Sri Lankan politicians. Defence Minister Ranjan Wijeratne, in fact, had threat-

> ened that if the IPKF did not leave on its own, the Sri Lankan Army would have to evict it. Later, he tried to make amends, going so far as to say that he was grateful to the IPKF for responding to his country's call. At a private banquet in honour of the IPKF at the posh Taj Samudra hotel in Colombo last fortnight, Wijeratne apologised profusely for the aspersions he had cast on the IPKF



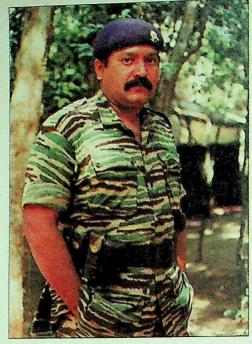
'under political compulsions'.

Now with the IPKF out of Sri Lanka, the onus of working out a political solution to the ethnic issue rests with President Ranasinghe Premadasa. On March 25, Premadasa offered prayers for the integrity and unity of Sri Lanka and India. Though Wijeratne has expressed the hope that the peace in the island will last, the ground situation indicates otherwise.

Following the IPKF pull-out, armed LTTE cadres have taken control in the north and the east. Sandbags and bunkers left behind by the IPKF are being manned by the Tigers; checkposts have been set up at strategic points; and heavily-guarded offices of the LTTE and its political wing, the People's Front of Liberation Tigers (PFLT), have sprung up. Nissan and Pajero pick-up vans, filled with armed cadres wearing their newly designed uniforms, move around Trincomalee, Vavuniya, Point Pedro and Kilinochchi.

As aggressive-looking cadres patrol the areas, the police and the Sri Lankan

Pirabhakaran (top); and (right) Mahathaya enters Trincomalee



Army stand by, not wanting a confrontation. In Kankesanthurai in the Iaffna peninsula, the police say they are under explicit orders of the LTTE to police only certain places. Says Kailash, 24, a LTTE organiser: "The police have to

take the LTTE's permission if they want to move around in the Odducuddan area."

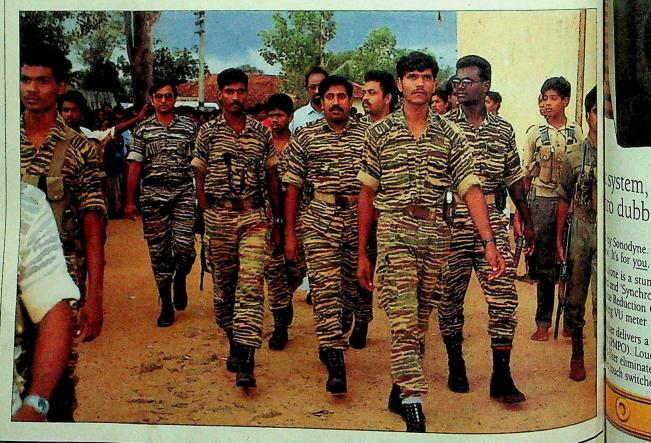
Flags and posters of the LTTE and the PFLT dominate the areas and it seems as if no other political party exists. Restaurants and street-corners play the group'spa. triotic songs and speeches praising martyrs and explaining why and how they fought the cause of the Tamils all these years. Area leaders of the LITE hold durbars on local problems and even preside over peoples' courts.

Clutching a wireless set, LTTE political leader Rueben, 30, arbitrates on people's woes. Incidentally, over the past few weeks nearly 500 people have expressed their regret to Rueben for their previous links with other Tamil militant groups like the EPRLF and the ENDLF.

With most militants belonging to these groups having fled to India and other places in fear of the

> delivers a MPO). Lou et eliminate

Tigers, the people are convinced that it is the LTTE that will rule the roost. And the Tigers are busy recruiting new cadres. Among them is 13-year-old Dinesh, with a cyanide capsule slung around hisneck. In Jaffna, it is a common sight to see



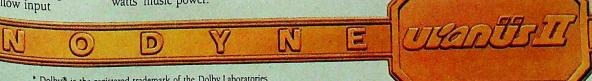


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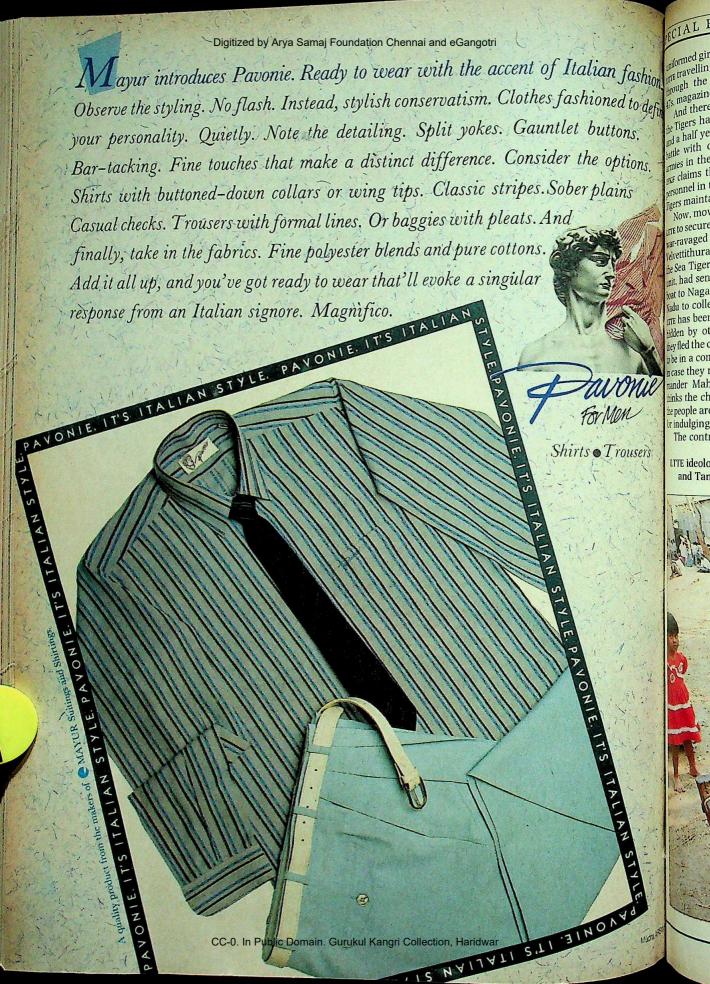
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miormed girls belonging to the n fashion in travelling on two-wheelers the town, toting AK which the town, toting AK is magazines and grenades. And there are no signs that te Tigers had for the past two nd a half years waged a bitter tatle with one of the largest mies in the world. While the Fit claims the LTTE lost 2,200 ersonnel in the operations, the Igers maintain only 683 died. Now, moves are afoot by the TE to secure more arms. In the ar-ravaged coastal town of Telvettithurai in Jaffna district, e Sea Tigers, the LTTE's naval mit, had sent off a mechanised hat to Nagapattinam in Tamil

Vadu to collect arms. Also, the

me has been unearthing arms

iden by other groups before

ney fled the country. The idea is

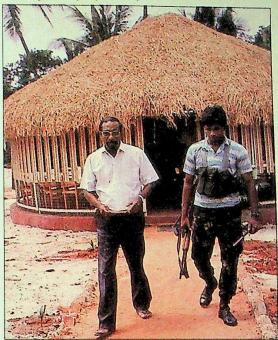
be in a commanding position

case they return. LTTE's com-

nander Mahathaya, however, hinks the chances are remote as even ie people are screaming for their blood frindulging in large-scale looting. The contrast with the earlier days.

LITE ideologue Balasingham (top); and Tamil refugees in Orissa

Digitized by Arya Samaj Foundation Chennal and eGangotri

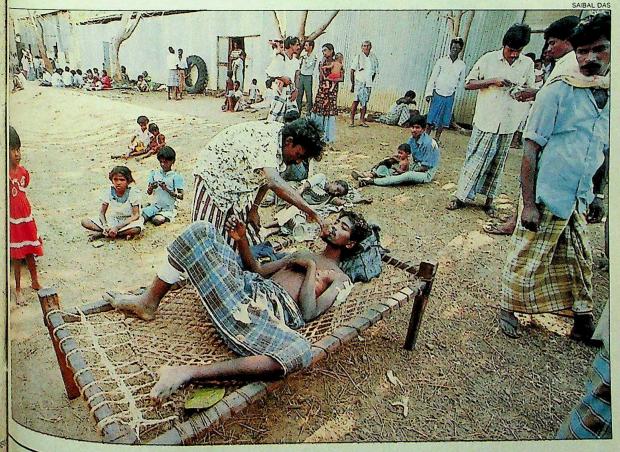


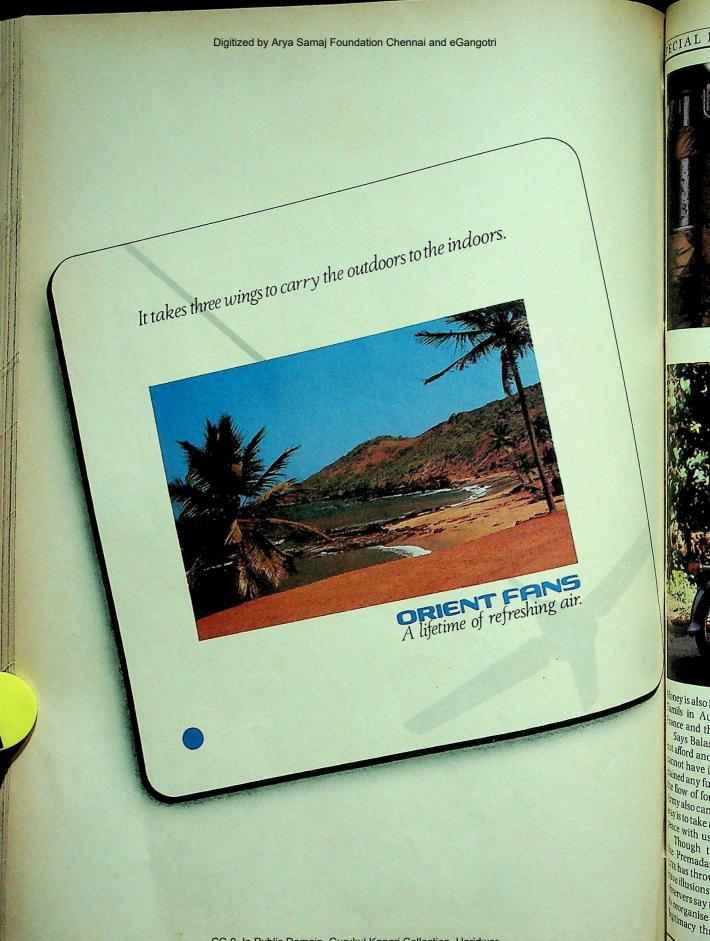
when EPRLF, ENDLF, PLOTE and TELO had a commanding presence in the island, is stark. Today, the empty offices of these groups present a pitiable sight. In some places, the LTTE has taken charge of the offices. Says Sidthadthan, leader of PLOTE: "There is going to be serious trouble now. No group will be allowed to exist.'

The Tigers have categorically ruled out surrender of weapons, saying that the security of the North Eastern Province depends on their retaining arms. LTTE ideologue Anton Balasingham's statement that it was not feasible to surrender arms without ensuring security of the north and the east, has made a mockery of Wijeratne's stand that he was going to make Sri Lanka a gunless country.

But following the LTTE's elevation to the stature of a political party, which will contest the provincial elections promised by Premadasa, there is a distinct change in approach. Even the taxes levied by them are now called donations to the PFLT for 'serving the people'. Tigers can be seen positioned on highways, stopping trucks carrying goods.

Instead of security personnel, the Elephant Pass linking the Jaffna peninsula with the rest of the island is full of LTTE men. The members also go around shops and establishments to collect taxes, equipped with the latest bank balances of top businessmen and professionals.

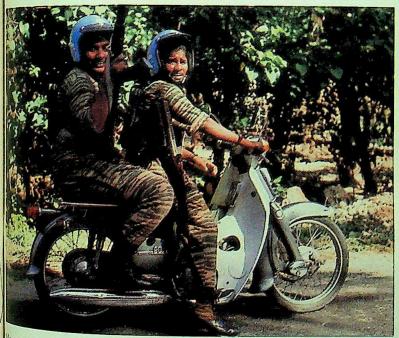




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An LTTE arsenal; and (below) a woman Tiger in Jaffna



oney is also flowing in from Sri Lankan anils in Australia, the UK, the US, tance and the Gulf.

Says Balasingham: "Sri Lanka canafford another war with the LTTE. It anot have its record of human rights any further as it might interrupt low of foreign aid. The Sri Lankan myalsocannot contain us. So the best is to take a new approach to making

Though the honeymoon between Premadasa Government and the thas thrown up hopes of peace, few fillusions of it lasting long. Political toros ay the LTTE is just buying time inacilities and acquire a new macy through the ballot-box. It's strategy is to affirm itself as the real representative of the Tamil people and raise the demand for an Eelam. As Colombo will not agree to the demand, an armed struggle of frightening proportions will restart.

SKS Sam Tambimuttu, EPRLF MP, pessimistically: "Will there be peace some day?" Tambimuttu, who abandoned his mansion in Batticaloa after it was looted day after day for a whole week by LITE cadres, has launched a virulent attack against the LTTE in Parliament. Accusing the group of piling arms for an armed combat and selling the dream of an independent country, he has released a list of items being taxed by the LTTE and said the people had to be a silent witness to such extortion as the Government was too weak to act.

Meanwhile, the focus of the LTTE over the last few weeks has been on organising the PFLT. Daily meetings-addressed by leaders like Mahathaya and Yogiratnam Yogi, PFLT general secretary-are drawing eager crowds. The leaders do not directly talk of Eelam, but the spirit of an independent land is present in the speeches.

Last fortnight, poet Kasi Anandan drew applause at a PFLT meeting in Vavuniya when he said that any foreigner could capture his land, but could not rule over it. They could defeat the people, but could not destroy them. At Killinochchi, Mullaitivu, Batticaloa, Pullumalai, Vakara and Kalmunai, Yogi raved that India had signed an accord not to protect the life and property of Tamils, but to secure its geo-political interests. The Tamils were reminded of how over the past four decades they have been discriminated against in jobs. education and other areas. The stress is clearly on the Tamil identity and territorial integrity—the platform on which the LTTE hopes to ride to power.

The EPRLF provincial government in Trincomalee—which had the blessings of the IPKF-surprised everyone on March 1 when the Varadaraja Perumalled North East Provincial Council constituted itself into the national state assembly of the Free and Sovereign Democratic Republic of Eelam-a step short of actually declaring a separate state.

India was quick to announce in clear terms that it was not in support of a separate Tamil state in any form. India reaffirmed its faith in the unity of Sri Lanka. Clearly, India did not want to add to its already misunderstood role in the troubled island. Meanwhile, Perumal and his council members vanished. That India had backed Perumal at one time is today scorned by Sri Lanka.

The future of the surf-washed picturesque island continues to hang like a question mark. The ethnic trouble in the island may be under wraps at the moment, but the peace-loving Sri Lankan is apprehensive that the powder-keg will explode any time. "The time has come for every Tamil family to give off one of their sons to the LTTE," says retired government officer V. Sivalinga, 58, of Trincomalee whose son Ravi, 28, has abandoned his medical studies to be with the LTTE to "fight for the respect of Tamils". The time bomb, he says, continues to tick. Very few in the north and the east would disbelieve him.

-RAMESH MENON in Sri Lanka

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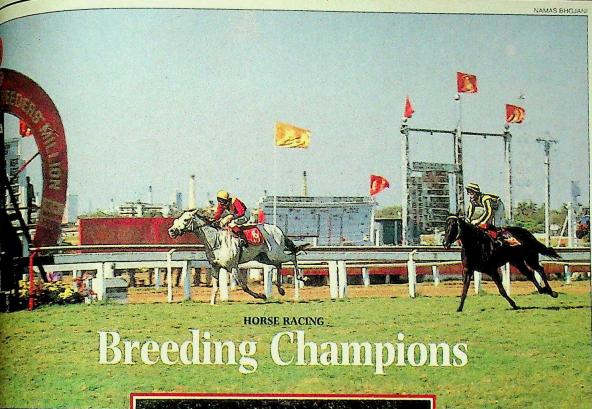
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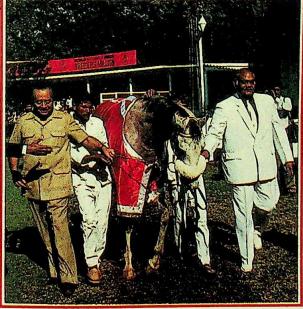
excitemen race—and emoney. A horses th turf for t ralla Breede imbay's pict mi Raceco teht, Indian ra made. Fo winning h lion rupees the owner a more ur at that the ared not by o the giants in facted to the foup of bree Explained alla, whose awrote and restricted breeders g Ponse to the e not puttir



Thad all the colour and excitement of a classic race—and much more of emoney. As a large field of horses thundered down turf for the first Poonaalla Breeders' Million at mbay's pictures que Maha-Racecourse last fortalt, Indian racing history made. For the first time, winning horse raked in a Monrupees as prize money the owner. What made it m more unusual was the t that the race was sponrednot by one of the corpole giants increasingly atacted to the sport, but by a oup of breeders.

Explained Cyrus Poonaa, whose stud farm un-

awrote and promoted the race which restricted to three-year-olds: "A few breeders got the idea of the race in onse to the general feeling that they not putting enough back into the energy though the breeding industry ong well." The response from other eders was overwhelming. Over 50 of contributed to the stakes, taking Mize money for the first six horses to and Rs 16.25 lakh. "The Breeders on will be good for breeders also—it attract new owners to the sport,"



P.M. Rungta (right) with his winner horse Le Gris Cheval

added Pradeep Mehra, whose stud farm near Delhiranks second to Poonawala in producing champion horses.

Ironically though, the race itself produced a major upset. It was won by a rank outsider-former cricket board chief P.M. Rungta's Le Gris Cheval bought at the Bombay auction for a meagre Rs 80,000 from Rajendrasinhji Idar's Pratap Stud Farm. The grey colt

ran against odds of 79 to one. Admittedly, a long delayed start upset the leading contenders, and three horses were withdrawn at the last moment. Exclaimed a delighted Rungta: "Many small owners will take heart from the win. It shows that you don't necessarily have to own a million-rupee horse to win a major race.

In a way, Cheval's win shows that even cheaper horses are of a better quality now. With the boom in breeding, standards have gone up, and even small owners are choosy about the pedigree of colts and fillies they purchase. "There has been a tremendous improvement in the

bloodline. The breeding industry is very buoyant, and poised for a major breakthrough," said Major S. Nargolkar, registrar of the Indian Stud Book.

About 1,000 thoroughbreds are produced annually at nearly 100 stud farms across the country, to be sold for prices ranging from Rs 75,000 to an incredible Rs 20 lakh. "With the boom in quality, we can seriously think of exporting our horses to a major racing centre like Hong Kong. But the Government will have to help in removing the quarantine



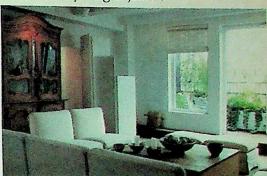
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third Mahindra brother who proby the borses instead of jeeps. However, was at export will have to wait all traces of a debilitating blood ment detected in some Indian horses

Meanwhile, stud farms continue to Meanwhile, stud farms continue to aport stallions and mares from repowned European and American bloodies for breeding. This season again the fine horses have come in. The agest buzz was caused by new entrant apoorji Mistry, of the Shapoorji Palmi construction group, who bought a hily-rated stallion and mare for the mily's stud farm near Pune.

Small fortunes are splurged by Inin breeders at the famous Newmarket
ition in London. "The breeding game
india is so hot now that economic
ities no longer mean anything to
meders," observed Gautam Kotwal,
cor of The Indian Thoroughbred, a leadis bimonthly whose pages are full of
mediarm advertisements.

The entry of the Shapoorji Pallonji oup into horse breeding is typical of big money flowing into the business recent years. The latest investor is ne other than Manu Chhabria. In wither offshore deal, the Dubai tycoon spicked up half the shares of an sestment company connected to the Hussain Stud Farm near Pune. Rival siness magnate Vijay Mallya has yet invest directly in a stud farm, but he w keeps 22 brood-mares at various Marms. Breeders from other promiat business families, like Shyam and Suresh Mahindra, are busy engthening their stud farms.

The breeding industry will have to qualitatively now. Any further antitative growth will bring about a sitrous slump. Breeders must have admanagement and infrastructure death rate at stud farms is appallsaid Poonawalla, who bred the last te Indian Derby winners. Just a good greeisnotenough. Poonawalla feels and Pradeep Mehra have done well they concentrated on developthoroughbreds suited for the ther Indian conditions. Now he to use the Derby winner Exhilarafor breeding, to see if an Indian on can start a winning line.

The Poonawalla Breeders' Million with have come to an unexpected and interest in the first in the poonawalla Breeders' Million with the poonawalla Breeders' Million in the poonawalla Breeders in the poonawalla Breeders' Million in the poonawalla Breeders' Million

TV SERIALS

In Focus

Sports feast in the offing

O, you've seen Nadia in six parts. And the Jesse Owens story in another six. Well, here comes the Flying Sikh in seven. Yes, a TV serial based on the autobiography of Milkha Singh is all but ready. Nor is that all. Doordarshan has commissioned a clutch of other sports-based programmes, and many of them should be on the small screen soon.

Scheduled to be on the air from this fortnight on is a 30-minute round-up every Sunday morning of the previous

There are plans for a programme on the tribal sports of India—including one on the stilts used by Madhya Pradesh tribals for their games. This will involve shooting fresh footage, unlike the ones on international sports which are rehashed versions of foreign productions. Thus, the programme presented by Pele was initially a 76-minute Bratleevision production that has been edited and split into two shows of 25 minutes each.

Programmes like *The Flying Sikh* really represent the development of sports programmes in India. It has two young actors playing Milkha at different stages. Charanjit Bhogal is superb as Milkha the adolescent—running barefoot across village tracks. Yadvinder Singh, who plays Milkha as a young soldier, is a hurdler himself. "There was



(From left) Milkha; Kohli; and Yadvinder

week's major sports events around the world. Privately sponsored, it will string together the highlights of major international tourneys, which will be bought from international TV firms.

A major series in the making is *Indian* Sports Since 1947. Produced by Times TV, the six-part series will focus on the development of hockey, tennis, yachting, gymnastics and athletics over the last four decades. Also nearing completion is a series, exclusively on Indian hockey, called Golden Hawks.

The focus in the year of the World Cup will be football. Apart from live coverage of the tournament, Doordarshan plans to dish up a 10-part runup to that. Called Superman Soccer, it will focus on the all-time greats from Zico and Bobby Charlton to Maradonna and Platini. Before that, there will be a two-part series of great football moments presented by no less than Pele.

so much running to be done, we would have had a casualty on our hands if we'd given it to an actor who wasn't an athlete," says producer Ramesh Kohli.

Spliced into the episodes are films of the actual races Milkha ran—the famous one at the 1960 Rome Olympics, for instance. The last episode is virtually an interview with the present-day Milkha.

Other ideas in the works at Mandi House include proposals for a sports quiz. One of them wants to quiz panels of star sportspersons—Indian, Pakistani, and others—on sports. Vijay Amritraj wants to present a 13-part series of some of the more exciting tennis matches of the last two decades, interspersed with his comments on them.

With enthusiastic proposals from sports stars like Amritraj, and a bevy of young sports managers willing to do the leg work, sports programmes can only improve in both quantity and quality. "There's so much sport in the world that needs to be seen," as Amritraj says.

-DAVID DEVADAS

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government makes changes at the top

Tis spring-cleaning time for the National Front Government. And the broadbroom, which swept governors ndambassadors aside, has now found a ew target: heads of film bodies.

Within its first 100 days in office, the wernment has accepted the resignaof National Film Development Corvation (NFDC) chairman B.K. Karanjia d refused extension to managing distor Malati Tambay-Vaidya; bullied wam Benegal to quit as Film and Levision Institute of India (FTII) chairan (Benegal refused to oblige); reaced Urmila Gupta as head of the rectorate of Film Festivals of India Gy the street the resignation of Jaya

be a more open one. While a ministry official claims the appointments are routine, Sunil Doshi, member of the outgoing Film Imports Selection Commitee (FISC), points out: "They are replacing one set of favourites with another."

But no move has aroused so much ire as the Government's hamhanded attempt to remove Benegal. Says he: "If they want to remove me, they should remove all vice-chancellors. My ap-



PRASHANT PANILAR

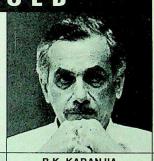
Besides changing personnel, Upendra wants to tighten up censorship guidelines.



YASHICA

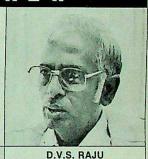


JAYA BACHCHAN



B.K. KARANJIA





Critics point out that the replacements are all friends of the Government.

chchan from the chairpersonship of Children's Film Society of India asi); and appointed new members on regional boards of film certification. In all this, critics are pointing out a ch-hunt. Especially, since the reacements are all non-controversial areaucrats or friends of the Govern-Benegal is reportedly being unded because of his identification the former regime following his serial Bharat Ek Khoj. The new NFDC aman is Telugu film maker D.V.S. who earlier held the same post. spak Sandhu, the new DFFI chief, had oked with Prime Minister V.P. Singh ing his tenure at the North Block. ata Dal sympathiser Shabana Azmi staken over at the CFSI. And the new aman of the Central Board of Film The central Bound The changes are all the more surpristhe new Government claimed to

pointment is an academic one. Why is it being politicised?" Though ministry officials now deny an attempt to remove him, the facts indicate otherwise. In early January, Benegal was sounded out by FTII Director K.G. Verma on whether he would like to resign. Says Benegal: "I realised the Government's intentions. So I've asked the Government for a letter formally requesting me to resign." That, the Government has refused to do so far. Its predicament is obvious as it has promised the job to film maker Atma Ram, who made a propaganda film on V.P. Singh in May '88.

Also controversial is the move to appoint an IAS officer as CBFC chairman to solve the problems of favouritism. Says former chairman Bikram Singh: "The chairman is subject to so many pressures. Bureaucrats will happily toe the government line." There is also some surprise over the removal of Urmila Gupta from the DFFI, since she was considered to have fallen foul of the Rajiv government. It was at festivals organised by her that documentary maker Homi Sethna and Shabana Azmi blasted the previous government.

However, the replacement of the CFSI chairperson Java Bachchan was predictable. But society officials are disappointed with the appointment of Shabana Azmi. Says an official: "The society's aim is to wean away children from commercial cinema. Yet the body is invariably headed by a star.'

At the NFDC, it was well-known that Karanjia and Tambay-Vaidya couldn't get along. In any case, Karanjia had resignation, whereas offered his Tambay-Vaidya had already received one extension which had ended.

But apart from changes of personnel, the Government has revealed a plan to streamline the film bodies. It is considering the industry's problems and is looking at the recommendations of the Mathur committee and the Tambay-Vaidya committee on video piracy; film festivals will be held in smaller cities and more regularly; and it is reassessing the need for having the FISC-an important demand of the US Government.

But it is in its attempt to shape ideas through film censorship that the new Government has shown a clear agenda. Guidelines for censorship are being enlarged. Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting P. Upendra wants to tighten up censorship of obscene and violent films. Three recent guidelinespreventing depiction of ignoble servility of women and exploitation of children; and promotion of a scientific tempergo beyond the constitutionally reasonable restrictions of freedom. Says Upendra: "Our society is not yet ready for abolition of censorship."

The fact remains that films and tele-

vision—the most powerful means of communication in a country with low literacy—are not about to be handed over on a platter to people. Freedom is all right, but within limits. Rues former censor board member Kiran Nagarkar, "We lower the voting age and consider an 18-year-old to be wise enough to be entrusted with the responsibility of choosing the fate of the country. But we don't allow him the freedom of what he should see or read." —SALIL TRIPATH

SABITA BADHEI

Poignant Script

▼HAT Ramoji Rao's Mouna Poratam (The Silent Struggle) would be a chart buster was known from the day the film unit took up the project. Sentiments, romance, villainy-the film, about an unwed mother's struggle for her conjugal rights, had it all. Mouna Poratam ran to packed halls, won rave reviews, and everyone involved prospered. Yamuna, the actress who played Durga, the pivotal character, left a lasting impression.

But while the celluloid image of Durga lingers on, Sabita, the teenager who inspired the film, is all but forgotten. She lives on in anonymity in Kulta Nuapalli village in Orissa's Sambalpur district. Her life in a shambles, she epitomises the bitter axiom that media hype doesn't alter one's fate.

Little over two years ago, Sabita Badhei sat on a 14-month dharna with her 'illegitimate' child in front of her paramour's house, seeking marital recognition. Mediamen arrived in hordes, and she became an overnight celebrity. The lok adalat was forced to step in and in the presence of high court judges, the wayward paramour, Somnath, was made to marry Sabita. Child in arms, the two posed for photographs, and the story was deemed to have ended on a happy note. So also ended Mouna Poratam.

But six months after the film made waves, the real life story took a heartrending turn. Somnath deserted her.

Sabita's story is one of teenage romance having gone sour. She was a 13-year-old illiterate beedi maker when she met Somnath, a rich beedi trader. For over a year, the love affair carried on. But when she delivered an 'illegitimate' child, Somnath refused to own up. Sabita hit back. With her

son, Shatrughan, just eight days old, she began a round-the-clock dharna in front of Somnath's house, which lasted 14 months. Recalls Sourindri

EASTERN PRESS AGENCY

as well as the media hoopla. Says she: "I accept my fate. If he takes me back I'll go. Or I'll live alone with my child." Sabita has few options. She has outlived her utility to newsmen; and Somnath won't accept her. Back in her hut, she is again rolling beedis.

It's obvious Somnath won't return. He stays 500 yards from Sabita. but doesn't recognise her. Attempts to mediate elicit abuses from his family.

Of her vanished fame, she has fondness only for the film makers. "They were the only ones who treated me with dignity," she says. For the

Sabita; and (below) Yamuna in Mouna Poratam



Nayak of Sambalpur: "Her resilience was terrific." Bamapada Tripathy, a local journalist, points out that Sabita could be the first feminist of Orissa.

Sabita has simpler reasons for doing what she did. Says she: "He disowned me. I felt bad and went on a dharna." But today, dark rings encircling her eyes, she looks tired of her life

film's muhurat, she travelled by train. for the first time, to Vishakhapatnam. She stayed at a fancy hotel, and had gifts showered on her. But she never saw the film—she's never seen one. And the fleeting tryst with dignity she enjoyed is cold comfort today, lack as the present does the slightest kernel of hope for the future.—RUBEN BANERJEE

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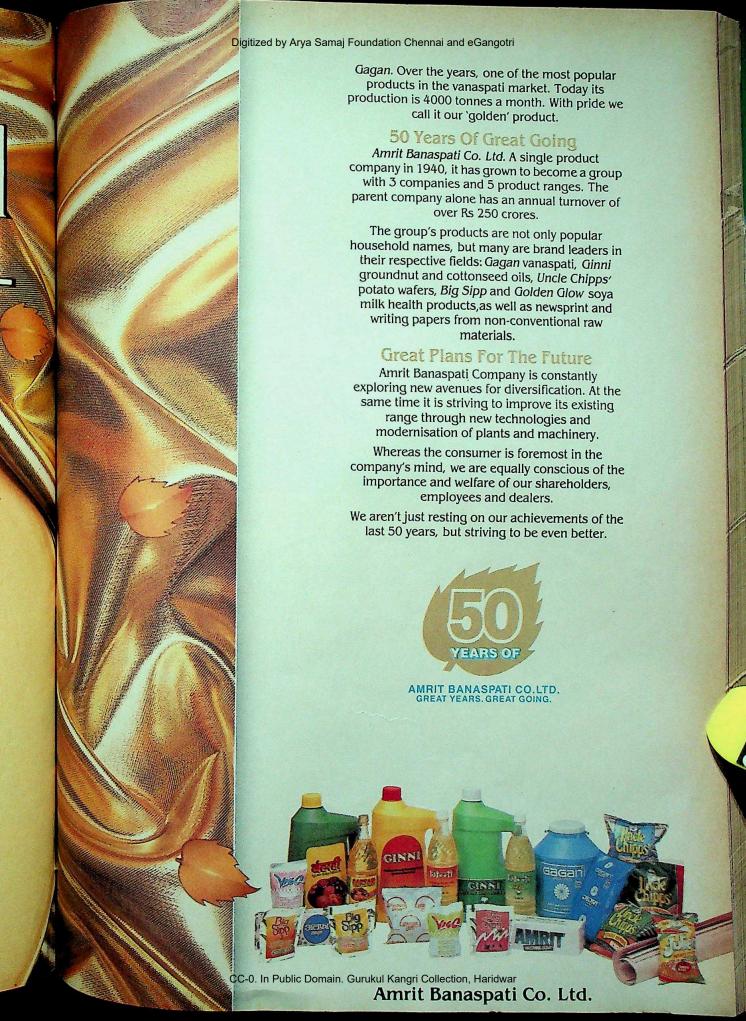


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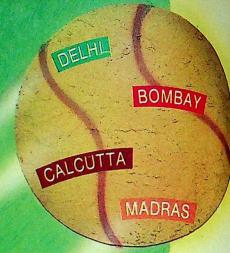
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OFFICE AUTOMATION

the Sick Machines

sers confront a host of hi-tech problems

10your desk has a state-of-the-art PC and an extension to a sophisticated PABX system. You have a fax maine at your disposal and a sleek ATM ntomatic teller machine) card gleamin your wallet. And you keep an owering machine at home. Don't sit ougly, prepare for the bad news.

Hi-tech gizmos invaded the workin the late '80s promising effincy, cheaper costs and greater protivity. But now there are problems: mputer viruses which eat databases red in PCs with great relish; fax fadeis, in which you suddenly discover atadocument you received some time pis now a blank sheet; semi-literate leagues who transfer your calls to heard-of destinations or interrupt umid-way through a conversation by inching the wrong keys so that you sit tening to jingle bells; ATM machines gulp your card even as you are ing out your account number in the osit slip; and callers who argue with wanswering machine, unaware that aren't there.

Suddenly, users of hi-tech are letting lacollective sigh. But not of relief. Far m running down the have-nots as softhe palaeolithic era, the hi-techlahs are grudgingly admiring those o conduct their business smoothly hout the fax.

The most serious problem is the computer virus (see box). To avoid the scourge, companies like Citibank, Mahindra and Mahindra, Hindustan Lever and the Oberoi Hotels group have a corporate policy of using only authorised software. But the virus has a way of getting into systems through computer games. One precaution: never accept free software from unknown vendors.

What's a virus? Simply a sinister program which aims to destroy. The benign ones print funny messages (like the Jerusalem virus: "Kill all Arabs" or the Pc-Stone virus: "Your computer is now stoned. Legalise marijuana"). Others can delete files, garble data or make computers in operative. They could even damage the PC critically.

The first computer virus to be developed in India arrived in January. It told the keyboard operator to type "Happy Birthday Joshi". When that was done, the system would collapse, requiring you to re-boot, or in other words, start all over again. But even harmless viruses may turn out to be not so harmless. Says Ajit Sawant, a consultant at Tata Consultancy Services: "Often what happens is that a destrucțive virus is hidden in a harmless one."

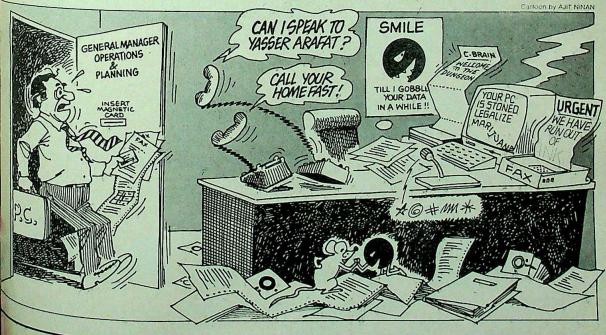
Two Bombay hospitals, scores of offices, and now newspapers have had to

contend with the virus. Bombay's new daily, The Independent, published just an eight-page issue on December 6 last year-the day Pritish Nandy took over as editor-when it was struck by the Jerusalem virus, which made a hearty meal of the business, sports and editorial pages data. Says Executive Editor Dina Vakil: "Now we have made a policy: that no outside disks are allowed." Another company lost four weeks of legal correspondence and accounts.

Computer networking-wherein computers are linked to exchange data and files-is still at a rudimentary stage in India; barely 5,000 of India's 150,000 computers are networked. But once computer networking advances, the virus problem will escalate to American proportions. Says Sawant: "The danger would increase with electronic mail." What could happen is that a virus could spot a particular message, attach to it, and then spread like wildfire to other computer systems.

Fortunately, vaccines have been developed to detect and obliterate viruses. But like their medical counterparts, computer vaccines are a step behind the disease. While it is possible to identify the 35 known viruses, new virus programs are continuously being created by computer jocks. There are only three solutions really: check the computer system regularly (most computerised organisations have a once-a-week virus scan), restrict the use of PCs, and use only authentic software.

Frequent interruptions in power supply are another glitch. So, highly computerised organisations increasingly have back-up facilities. At Citi-



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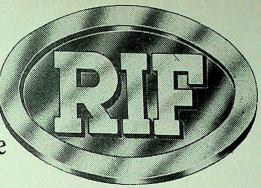
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bank, for instance, all data is duplicated. Says Oberoi Manager Sanjeev Malhotra: "We designed a system of back-ups so that even after glitches we come out looking good. We have 100 per cent redundancy." Recently, the Oberoi system lost 40,000 guest histories. A search through the back-ups retrieved them and averted what would have been a minor disaster.

When fax machines arrived in India in late 1987, they took export houses and corporate offices by storm. The ability to transmit documents using telephone lines rather than through sluggish human couriers seemed the panacea for all

delays. But as a senior Mahindra executive discovered last year, crucial correspondence received through fax lines can just get wiped out. Says Mohammed, Ghulam general manager, systems: "The ink just wears off and you're left holding a blank sheet of paper. Result: the company has now decided to photocopy every document that arrives by fax.

Fax fade-outs occur because facsimile machines print documents on thermal paper, which can retain ink only for a limited period. Characteristically, the Japanese have come up with a solution; Okl now makes a fax machine that enables printing on plain paper.

While viruses and fax fade-outs are technological problems, other problems are human. Example: at the mushrooming ATMs in Bombay, the machine is programmed to gulp the card if the user takes an inordinately long time to complete a transaction. Says a Citibank official: "This is meant to

protect the card user." But card users who are unfamiliar with the keyboards and the computer language of giving "yes-no" answers take considerable time groping for the correct key. And, whoosh, the card disappears.

The fear of the key is more apparent at five-star hotels, where sophisticated EPABX systems enable the hotel guest to instruct, for instance, the laundry without calling the operator, or programme a wake-call for himself by pressing a series of pre-determined keys. But, says Sunil Doshi, sales co-ordinator, Tata Telecom: "People continue to call the operator on the phone. They prefer to hear a human voice at the other end." Even at offices, few EPABX users take advantage of the

more complex options do-not-disturb. like conference calls and call-forward. Explains Tata Telecom General Manager P.C. Bajpai: "People are so used to the old ways that they just don't want to change."

their desks. Result: lost calls.

EPABXS also have to contend with the caste system in Indian offices and the chronic Big Boss Syndrome, where bosses enjoy the power of getting things done through secretaries. They want to



PROBLEMS OF COMPUTERS

TYPES OF VIRUS

Bombs: Programmed to trigger on particular dates, like the "Happy Birthday Joshi" virus.

Worms: Intended to spread through a network.

SPECIFIC COMMON VIRUSES

C-Brain: The oldest known virus, paralyses the system.

Prints message "Kill all Arabs" Israeli:

Discovered at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, US. Lehigh:

Struck on January 5, 1990 Joshi:

EB21: Hidden in the boot of the hard disk. Can be scanned

only through utilities. It deletes file allocations, so you don't even know if certain files exist or not.

Stone: Wipes out screen, proclaims: "Your PC is stoned.

Legalise marijuana."

SYMPTOMS

- Full memory is not available. When you log on, instead of giving the available memory as "640K", for example, it will say "638K". (Most virus programs have a memory of 2K).
- New bad sectors on the hard disks.
- Increase in the size of files.
- System takes longer to perform functions.
- Inexplicable disk access, that is, you are working on drive B when drive A's lights flash on for no reason.

TO REMOVE

- Overwrite infected sectors—a facility available through vaccines.
- Reformat the disks (but the fllp side is that you lose the data).

Unfamiliarity with keyboards creates unique problems. The operator is trained to forward calls to another extension when he leaves for the day. But the next morning, he forgets to cancel that command and finds that he isn't getting any calls. Similarly, people moving from one place to another in the same office can press a call-forward command-which transfers their calls to wherever they have moved. But they forget to depunch it when they return to

press as few keys as possible. Worse, they feel their power is enhanced if they have "a direct line". So while the boss gets barely a dozen calls on his direct line and makes not more than 10 calls a day, just outside his cabin, over 100 employees are sharing perhaps 20 lines.

The answering machine appeared as an ideal, error-free messaging system, until owners realised that even that had glitches. Says Ormax Consultants chief Vispy Doctor: "Most people in India still haven't a clue how to use it. So barely two out of every dozen calls are comprehensible." Some callers have fights with the phone without realising that the voice at the other end is a recording: "Sunta nahl kya? Jawaab kyon nahi deta?" (Can't you hear? Why don't you answeri)

There are other complaints about his tech office equipment. Says a senior officer: "With the fax I have to read faster and work more and longer." Jour nalists of The Times of India in Bombay complain that their computer system is too complicated. They want to be paid more because they are using computers Now, weren't the hi-tech gizmos meant to reduce cost and labour and enhance —SALIL TRIPATIS leisure time?



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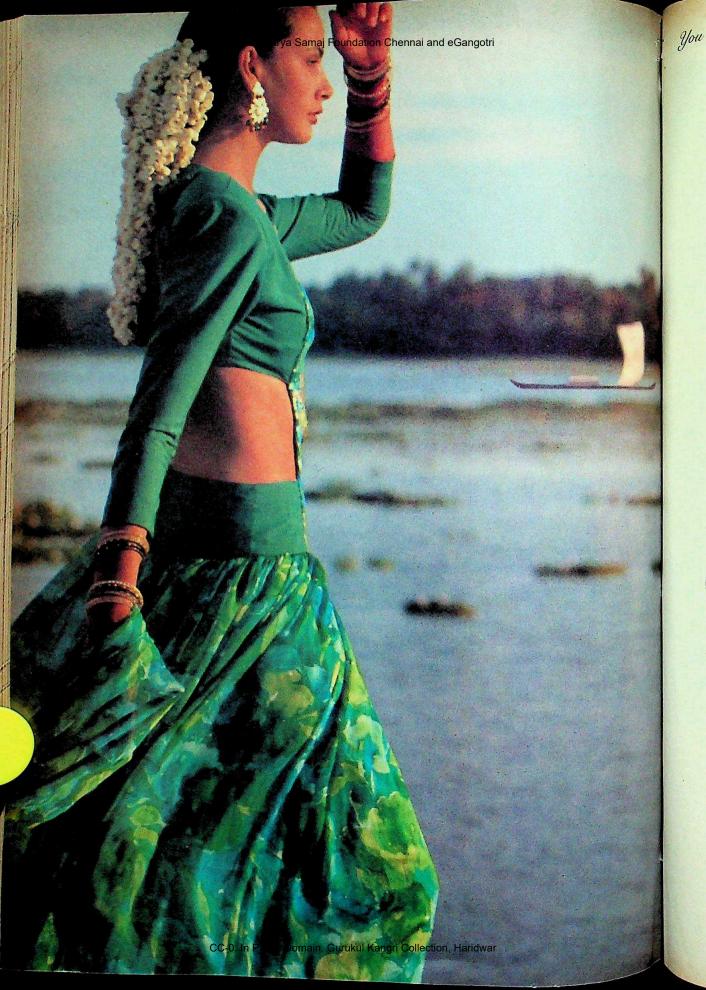
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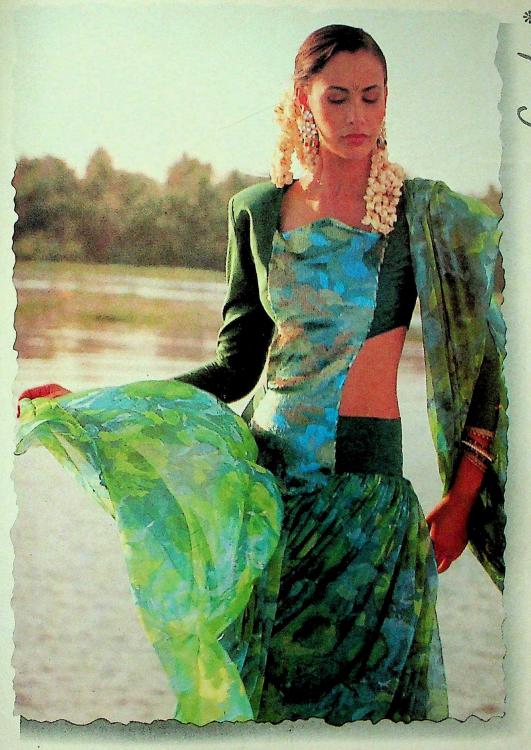
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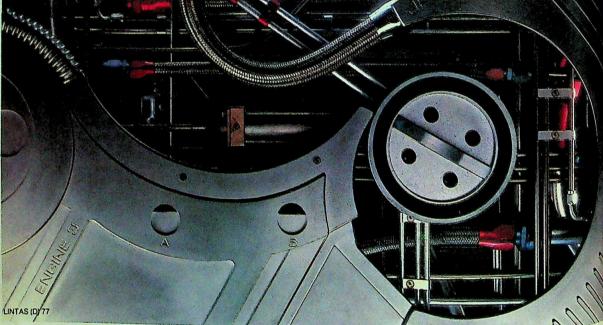
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FABRIC IDEAS







CENTURIES OLD TRADITIONS.

STATE OF THE ART TECHNOLOGY.



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Those busy

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_{robing} a politician's soul

WASTHE R. ANANTHA MURTHY e: Rs 65; Pages: 190



AWASTHE is not just the portrait of a politician, it's an X-ray. Worming his way into the mind-and very being-of his characters is getting to be a habit with Anantha Murthy, witness his

dmark novel, Samskara. In this, his d novel, the author strips his proonist, Krishnappa Gowda, a politileader of the Left and an idolised pi-god figure in the Karnataka of ergency days, right down to his mised soul.

The powerful novel as with the 50-yearthero on his deathbed. itis not just death he come face to face with, the truth. For the h-as all the rememinces of things past th deathbeds nory invite—is the fact the has compromised th honesty.

The termites of corion have over the aseaten into this oncealistic man; not even conscience has been

wd. Worse, he has been used by oth-shark businessmen and wily dicians to further their own greedy ldealists like the charismatic hnappa are for them convenient an horses to enter the citadels

Murthy: incisive

The book is more than a depiction the inner journey of Krishnappa the in that curious transit point teen flashbacks to an age of rural Cence ("He would wait again for the toloured parrots to come and sit on guava free...") and a swampy thwhere the machinations of those adhim make him sink further into Romise, and even worse, luxury. scent mirrors that of post-Indedence India. h_{lose b}usy termites have also eaten

into the tapestries of dreams woven by the builders of a free India, when going forward means slipping back. Krishnappa's well-intended acts come back to hit him like boomerangs. For example: the Tenancy Act that he pushed through to take land away from corrupt maths and religious sects actually replaces feudal landlords by capitalist landlords. The little favours that he accepts from the powerful to help the needy and his friends only ensnare him further in their subtly spun webs of corruption.

Anantha Murthy also places Krishnappa's sexual life under the microscope. Power brings with it perks in the shape of a stream of women. Yet Krishnappa, who always ran away from what he "intensely desired", still yearns for love and completeness, even as he lies dying. What gives the passages about women and love greater resonance are the allusions to goddesses. "Krishnappa would then think of Annaii as a devotee worshipping a goddess, offering to Uma thought in the place of flowers." Annaji is his Marxist, quasi-Naxal guru who is in love with and, in a way, living off Uma,

a woman married to an upwardly mobile businessman for whom the thoughts of Marx and Mao are a step up the social ladder.

Pivotal to the novel is the protagonist's jail experience; its shadow colours the rest of his life. Warrangal Jail, or a "vision of hell", is where idealism Krishnappa's and innocence come up against the dark ways of the world. It is not only the torture chambers which

startle him, but also the ordinariness of his tormentors: they are not devils incarnate but ordinary, little men-clerks. The inhumantiy of little men to man.

Awasthe, roughly translated, means the condition. And in his novel, Anantha Murthy has given us a glimpse of the condition of the soul of not just his hero-that-almost-failed but of the country. The novel written in 1978, an English translation of which was published only last fortnight, remains relevant to contemporary facts of political life.

Perhaps, the translation could have been better; it could do with greater flow. But Garutman, with its initial series of translations of four important works of Indian literature, should be commended. This is only the beginning.

-MADHU JAIN

Personal Touch

Mandela's life story charted

HIGHER THAN HOPE The Authorized Biography of Nelson Mandela by fatima meer Hamish Hamilton Ltd Distributed by Rupa & Co Price: Rs 278; Pages: 426



THE paradox is obvious. A biography of Nelson Mandela at this stage would be a runaway success, but a definitive biography cannot be written. The man was not a legend in his forty-third year

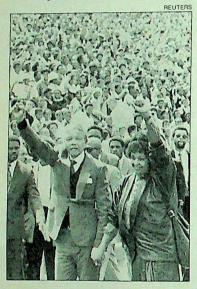
when he was imprisoned; the legend evolved over the 27 years that he spent in jail. How does a biographer divine the mental processes of a lonely revolutionary in a cell? This is not the stuff of a biography; this is the stuff of an autobiography, reflective notes like Julius Fucik's Notes From the Gallows. Fatima Meer is acutely aware of this and other limitations as she embarks on Higher Than Hope. It is billed as Mandela's authorised biography but nowhere does Fatima claim it to be a definitive biography of this great man.

When I discussed this book last month in Durban with Fatima, she was quite candid: "Nelson's biography at this stage of the struggle inside South Africa can at best only touch on his political activities-a more complete political biography can only be written after our victory, after apartheld has been buried." For obvious reasons the more engaging aspects of Mandela's political life cannot be made public, not quite yet. It involves clandestine meetings, secret military training, underground structures, astoundingly complicated methods of being part of the movement in exile, in Lusaka and Tanzania.

In fact, Fatima had difficulty introducing even the human interest details. Take, for instance, this passage where Evelyn, Mandela's first wife recounts the reasons why their marriage collapsed: "I heard from Thembi (their son) that Nelson was marrying the social worker from Baragwanath: the name was Winnie Mdikizela. I thought how ironic that it was not any of the women we had quarrelled over that had finally ended our marriage, but a newcomer. Oh! Winnie was not responsible for the break, but because he wanted to marry her there had to be a divorce!

When Oliver Tambo, president of the African National Congress, saw the draft of the book he suggested references to extra-marital Mandela's should be deleted because "they would not have a good effect on the movement". But when Fatima sent the draft to Mandela in Victor Verster Prison along with Tambo's suggestions, Mandela asked the author to "go ahead with my human frailties".

The portrait of this remarkably self-



Mandela: living legend

confident man with a robust zest for living including a very human interest in well-groomed women comes across in the book. The hardships of a separated family is the thread that runs through while Fatima weaves in all the details of the beginnings of the struggle in that blighted land. The police repressions, brutalities, the dramatic Rivonia trial.

The Meers-third generation Indians; Fatima's husband Ismail is a distinguished lawyer in Durban-have been part of the South African struggle and have known Mandela intimately from days when he first embarked on his great political mission. In fact, the last night before Mandela was picked up by the South African Police was spent in the Meers' Durban apartment. The very idea of this book took shape when Winnie Mandela and Fatima shared the same prison. This degree of intimacy with the Mandelas lurks in the pages. This is the book's strength and its weakness.

-SAEED NAQVI

Rare Insight

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INDIAN DEFENCE REVIEW Edited by LT. GEN. MATHEW THOMAS Lancer International Price Rs 250; Pages: 200



INDIAN ARMY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

by MAIOR K.C. PRAVAL Lancer International Price Rs 400; Pages: 465

IX months ago, news agency tickers put out a sensational story detailing an operation called Op Topac, hatched by Pakistani intelligence agencies under Zia to snatch Indian Kashmir through a mixture of religious subversion, low intensity conflict and. finally, direct military intervention. Today, each new development in Kashmir reads like a paragraph out of the story. So much so, that many experts have begun to believe that Op Topac was a real plan unearthed by Indian intelligence.

Actually, Op Topac was the name of a fictitious scenario visualised and then analysed by a talented team of retired soldiers in New Delhi as a likely Pakistani strategy to grab Kashmir. Published in the July 1989 edition of the Indian Defence Review it was war-gaming at its best. Today in the corridors of South Block those dealing with the challenge in Kashmir are poring over each para of Op Topac and wondering where it differs, if at all, from the situation they are currently facing.

Knowing is half the battle, goes the military adage. And that is the point Lancers International-which publishes on defence-related matters-is proving both to the pundit and the layman. These books make a major contribution towards analysing the threats India faces today, its strengths and weaknesses and what it needs to do. The latest edition of the Review-now India's best known military publica-

tion—takes up issues ranging from an Indian National Security Council to the problems faced by the indigenous main battle tank Arjun. There is also a striking comparison of operations of the Indian Army in Sri Lanka and the Soviets in Afghanistan.

While the Review deals with relatively current issues. Praval's Indian Army After Independence is a work of remarkable candour and amazing tesearch considering the defence establishment's obsession with secrecy, Very little is declassified in India and very little put down on paper. But defying that and the Official Secrets Act, Praval has put together perhaps the finest work ever on the operational history of the Indian Army. The book does not even pretend to analyse issues of higher command and long-term strategy, or to comprehend the conceptual changes the gargantuan military machine has undergone. It is a straight account of everything the army has done in the battlefield, ranging from Kashmir to Congo and Amritsar to Tawang, detailed most meticulously.

Finally, we have a coherent account of both the disintegration of the 4th division in NEFA in 1962, and the blunders that cost us Chhamb both in 1965 and 1971. There is also plenty by wayo the Indian jawan's valour and heroics all told clinically without the hype so

Manning the Indo-China border

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characteristic of war history in militarily illiterate societies like ours.

In a country which possesses the world's fourth largest military machine spends 14 paise out of each budgeted rupee on defence compared to 15 pais on its annual plan; and has fought four wars in its independent history not than any other major nation since the War—the standard of parliamental debate on security matters is shocking juvenile. These books will help —SHEKHAR GUPP that gap.

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digenous main s also a striking s of the Indian the Soviets in eals with rela-Praval's Indian is a work of d amazing ree defence eswith secrecy. India and very But defying that ct, Praval has ne finest work history of the does not even of higher comtrategy, or to ptual changes machine has ght account of as done in the n Kashmir to Tawang, denerent account on of the 4th and the blunb both in 1965

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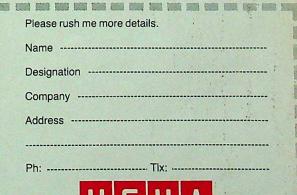


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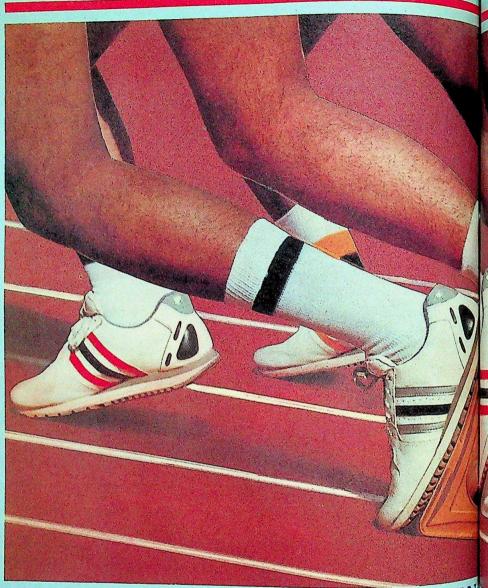
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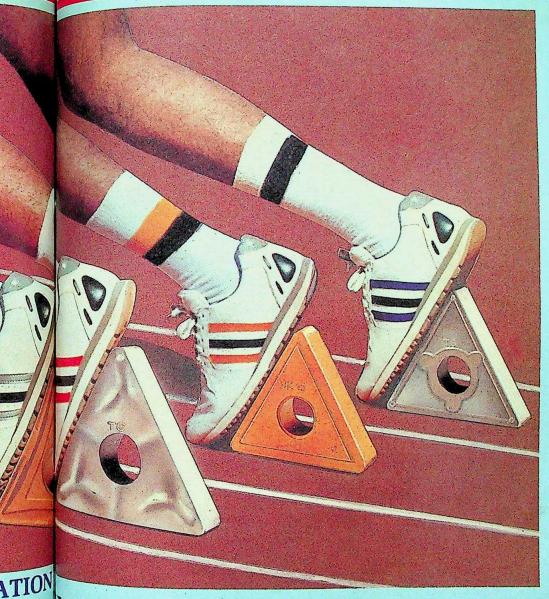
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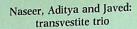
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A desi Tootsie? From the initial rushes, it sure looks like it. Instead of a hairylegged Dustin Hoffman, there is an all-star cast of Naseeruddin Shah, Aditya Pancholi and Javed Jaffrey prancing around a swimming pool dressed in drag and trying to dive in because five of the film's heroines happen to be there. The bevy of beauties consists of Sonu Walia, Pallavi Joshi, Ekta, Shikha Swamy and Prada. The Java transvestite trio's dance number, hopes producer Anil Sharma, will ensure Tehelka be-

comes his second successive hit. The maker of Elaan-e-Jung has roped in Dharmendra in the lead role. Actually if he can persuade the flat-footed Dharmendra to perform a classical dance, as he has in the film, he deserves all the hits he can make.

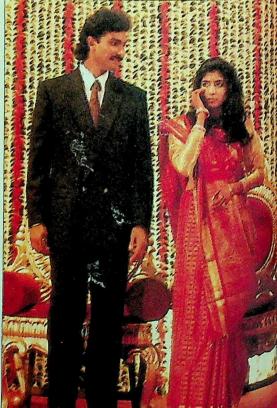
 What Dilip Doshi did to Gavaskar, Sunny did to Ravi Shastri. After a casual introduction two years ago courtesy Gavaskar, Shastri succumbed to the charms of Ritu Singh, daughter of a retired army colonel and a student of interior design from Delhi.

The debonair allrounder, who's been linked in the past Amrita Singh and Gabriella Sabatini, settled down in holy matrimony on March 19. Sunny danced with baratis. Shastri wanted to jive too, but since Sikh tenets prescribe that the groom display decorum, he had to show restraint. Bravado is fine, but only on the

Shastri and Singh: bowled over

field from now on. Exulted Shastri: "Ritu is just the kind of person I'd have married.' Well, one should think so.

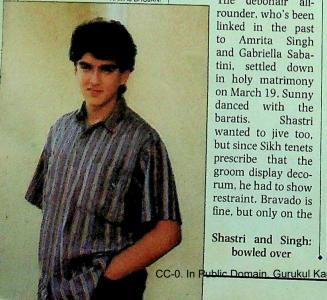
 So what is Suresh Kalmadi cooking now? Neither sporting extravaganzas, nor political coups. This time the flamboyant Congress(I) MP is into doing business at Delhi's 'in place', the Hauz Khas village. He is slapping together upmarket cuisine, while his partner in the



 \mathbb{O}_{OWN}

 He made his national debut in diapers-as the Nutramul baby. But Jugal Hansrai has come a long way since. At 17, he is set to romance the nation in Manmohan Desai's new film, Love Bird, a soppy love story. Though he essayed a memorable role in Masoom, this is clearly his big break. But Hansraj is confident. Asked if he had experience to help him emote love scenes, he says: "No. But that's what acting is all about, isn't it?"

Jugal Hansraj: big break



Ramani and Kalmadis: 'inh venture Bina Ramani, t high-flying socialite a canny Sindhi businesswom drapes out fashion. Sa Kalmadi, about the boutique restaurant complex: "We tried to create a village bist And the tremendous respon to the opening was a corolla to that." The response a sumed the form of, amor others, a coy Rekha w hubby, and Vinod Khanna

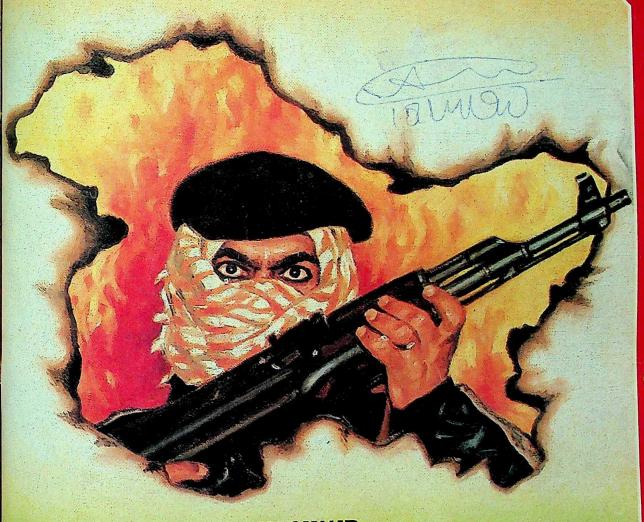




INDIA

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THE COMPLETE NEWSMAGAZINE



KASHMIR

The authority of the state in the Valley has been most severely eroded. For the Government there is little time and no soft options left.

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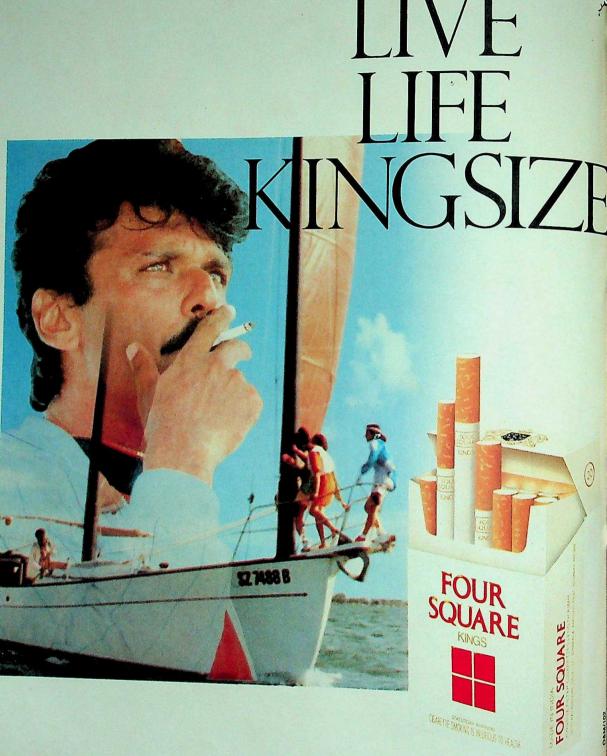
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LAST fortnight. I had the honour of being anded the B.D. Goenka award for excellence purnalism. I reproduce below my acceptance as it gives some indication of the ethos arlying INDIA TODAY.

HANK you for the generous and kind words about me. But I must in all humility say that this award is not for but for the many talented people who worked with me with dedication, inand sincerity to make INDIA TODAY that it is. It is on their behalf that I accept

A publication is a product of the mind pdisonly as good as the minds that work for And a good publication is the teamwork of any minds. I have always believed, and pefully practised, that no individual fould overshadow the publication he

orks for. Personality cult journalism does not, in my opinion, ad itself to durability.

Furthermore, I believe publications have another dimenon to them, unlike other enterprises. A publication has a life adspirit of its own, and is in many ways bigger than the people tho work for it. It imposes its own rules, codes and compulions. These go, or should go, far beyond the personal rejudices of the proprietor, editor or reporter. People who merride these unwritten compulsions do so at their own peril and at the cost of their publication.

Publications will do well to remember the old advertising dage: "The consumer is not an idiot, she's your wife." leaning, don't take the reader for granted. I believe readers resmart, discerning and critical. They do, in more cases than



The B.D. Goenka award

journalists would care to believe, see through slanted reportage or the ever-sosubtle editorial compromises a publication may make. I've always kept this in mind. It has made me strive for what I consider to be the cornerstone of any publicationcredibility.

By credibility I simply mean that the reader must believe what you are telling him. In fact, he's trusting you to tell him what you believe to be true to the best of your professional ability. I regard this as a sacred trust, for which a publication should bear any burden, pay any price, to discharge without fear or favour. Everything else, elegant writing, attractive photography and fine printing, is really only packaging which amount to nothing if there's no credibility. So in my work, I have basically asked two questions: Is it fair and accurate? Then, how

to make the printed page stick in the mind of the reader? I would also like to say that I feel doubly honoured in receiving an award instituted by a man such as Shri Ramnath Goenka, who with his indomitable spirit has shown to the Indian press that the freedom of the press is no-one's birthright, and has to be fought for continuously at every level. I do believe this country cannot remain in the form and substance as we know it without the free press. There is no substitute for it. And I must say, I'm proud to be a member of a fraternity that for all its faults still makes a difference for the better.

FOCUS THIS FORTNIGHT



Perilous Turn

Themilitant-fundamentalistsway over the lashmir valley is complete, and the country's dininistrative control has been almost toalynullified. The situation is critical, and the the for soft options over.

COVER STORY64



Return of Democracy

After suffering a wave of repression the winds of democracy have won a dramatic initial victory in Nepal. But it remains to be seen whether King Birendra can ensure his own survival in the emerging set-up.

SPECIAL REPORT.....22



On the Firing Line

The Ambanis are locked in a tussle with the Government over control of the engineering giant Larsen & Toubro. With both sides alleging foul play, the battle augurs to be a no-holds-barred one.

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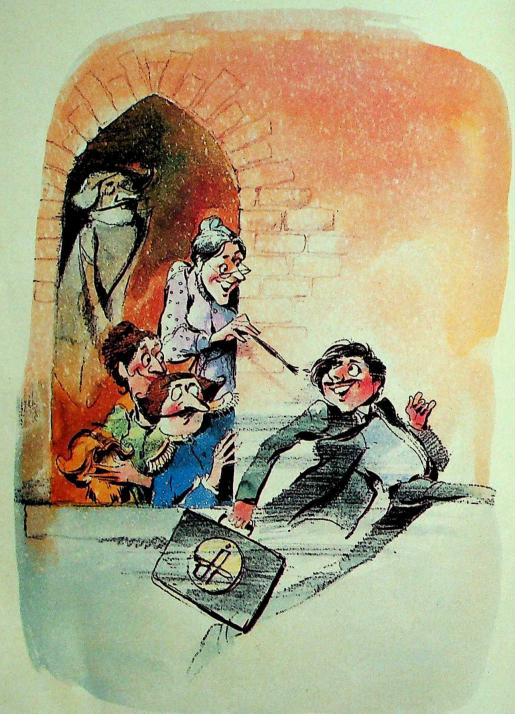
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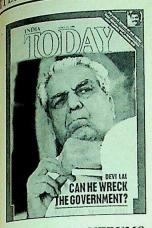
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THROWING TANTRUMS

The recent resignation drama of outy Prime Minister Devi Lal ("Can Wreck the Government?", April 15) mestostrengthen the belief that Prime hister Vishwanath Pratap Singh's kofcollective leadership at the Centre not so easy to realise.

V. PONNU SWAMY

History is being repeated in the rukshetra area after thousands of ars. Devi Lal is acting as Dhritrashtra hohas closed his eyes for the love of his n. Hisaction is bound to ruin Haryana. A.S. BERAR

I Trapped between the Devi and the ep sea, Vishwanath Pratap Singh resents a pitiable spectacle.

lahabad RAJEEV PANT

A TURNING POINT

The independence of Namibia freedom at Midnight, Almost'', April is a glowing tribute to the efforts ade by civilised society all over the orld. It also augurs well for the people neighbouring South Africa who have an fighting the racial regime for their to self-determination.

SURENDRA MOODLIAR

AFUNDAMENTALIST FORCE

It is wrong to project the BJP as a aularparty ("Saffron Seer", March 31) hen, in fact, it is a fascist organisation. utterances of its leaders, its instigaof communal violence and ob-Wantist ideology are nothing but fas-Most businessmen and educated

people are BJP sympathisers out of compulsion rather than conviction.

Indore ABHIRAM SAHOO

■ In the game of political tennis, right now, it is advantage L.K. Advani. His service has been excellent. Clearly, the ball is in his court. Though he may concede an occasional round now, he will ultimately win the game—the 1995 general elections.

Ahmedabad PUNJAWALA

- Just as the Congress(I) has been rejected due to corruption, the Janata Dal's record has been blotted by the Meham incidents. And with the left parties not having a big enough following, the field is almost clear for the BJP. RAIENDRA N. GOUR Lucknow
- That the BJP played the Hindu card during the recent elections can't be denied. What's of more serious concern to the minorities is the fact that the BJP supports fundamentalist organisations such as the VHP, the Anand Marg and the RSS.

Bangalore

I.S.C. DARS

L.K. Advani openly supports the VHP. And the VHP openly supported the three criminals who engineered the anti-Muslim riots in Bihar during the recent assembly elections. So much for Advani's "positive secularism".

J. AMALORPAVANATHAN Madras

■ Thank you for giving us a profile of the future prime minister of Hindustan. L.K. Advani has removed the stigma attached to the word Hindu. And he is right in saying that India is secular because it is Hindu.

APARAJITA SHEKAWAT Ghaziabad and VANDANA DUBEY

A SUMPTUOUS FEAST

Congratulations for sending a team on a historic and risky visit to Pakistanheld Kashmir ("The 'Other' Kashmir", March 31). The write-up is a landmark in reporting and photo journalism.

DIWAKAR PRASAD Ranchi

PIONEERING WORK

Dehra Dun's National Institute for Visually Handicapped has done com-

mendable pioneering work to provide relief to the blind ("A New Vision". March 31). But the number of such people in the country being high, it faces an uphill task.

West Bengal

PRASHANT BISWAS

A CONVENIENT PLOY

No one has been killed so far in Kashmir because of his religion ("An Alarming Exodus", March 31). Kashmiri Muslims have always considered Kashmiri Hindus as their brothers. The recent exodus of Hindus from the valley is an attempt on Governor Jagmohan's part to discredit the present mass movement and give it a communal colour. Jammu F. AHMED

AN INDELIBLE BLOT

Although India takes pride in being the world's largest democracy, the booth-capturing and violence at Meham ("In the Hot Seat", March 31) make a travesty of the democratic process.

Bangalore

KIRAN GOWDA

A USEFUL FIND

One positive outcome of the New Zealand series ("Short of Confidence", March 31) is the discovery of Sanjay Manirekar's batting talent.

Madras

ROBIN PALARAMB

■ The New Zealand series was a resounding victory for selector Raj Singh Dungarpur.

New Delhi

VRISHANK BAJAJ

■ To salvage Indian cricket, the cricket control board should be reconstituted, so that it comprises eminent players who do not indulge in witch-hunting while selecting the team.

Lucknow

S. PALIT

BREACH OF FAITH

The people of Punjab feel cheated for having been left out in the cold ("Missing the Bus", March 15) even as eight states and a Union territory went to the polls last month to elect representative governments. Any further extension of President's Rule will amount to a breach of faith. Prime Minister V.P. Singh's initiatives, like the sentimental trip to

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LETTERS

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Amritsar, the all-party rally at Ludhiana and the appointment of a humane governor, should have been followed up by the dismantling of the repressive police apparatus and the TADA Act, and amnesty for detenus. The National Front Government must understand that restoration of the democratic process is absolutely essential for bringing back peace and stability to Punjab. SARAN SINGH

Calcutta

SCARING AWAY INVESTORS

In "Labour Pangs" (March 15), Vayalar Ravi has warned prospective investors in Kerala of impending labour trouble. Judging by his past record it is true. When he was home minister, the union led by him at Cochin port resorted to an unreasonable and prolonged strike prompting some exporters to shift to Mangalore and Tuticorin.

Kuwait K.G. VARGHESE

■ The work force in Kerala is well aware of its rights but it often tends to ignore its responsibilities.

Cochin G. SANTHOSH KUMAR

■ Labour in Kerala was indeed militant from the '50s right up to the late' 70s but the last decade has been a period of relative calm. And pacifist tendencies have emerged in the labour force of the state during this period.

Trivandrum M.P. JOSEPH

A CLARIFICATION

In the article "Fossil Find" (March 31), we inadvertently referred to rhynchosaur as dinosaur. The error is regretted.

-Editor

A HARSH ASSESSMENT

Regarding Khushwant Singh's review of my book Samraj ("Epic Erotica", January 31), may I quote the words printed at the front of my book: "The Mahabharata has been retold in many forms, from drama to comic book. Nevertheless, I hope those who have cherished India's great epic since childhood will be patient with this reshaping of the traditional story into a modern historical novel. What follows is a modest attempt, by someone far from India, to make some of the essence of the epic more accessible to those in my own culture. And for them, 'a new river is best explored in a familiar boat'.

In my culture, gentle and literate descriptions of lovemaking between loving adults, especially married adults, are

quite acceptable. Indeed, it is completely expected and practically required in fiction of this type. However, the mock ing, crude tone of the review—and the use of certain words which are not there in my book—would be in poor taste in any culture. The review is also irresponsible in its attempt to upset and provoke negative responses from sincere, religious people who probably have not had the opportunity to judge the book for themselves. Still I praise the reviewer for the excerpt on dharma that he selected All in all, it is good to be reminded that there is so much freedom of speech in India, and I accept that both the words and tone are the reviewer's right.

I know that Samraj is not, in surface ways, in keeping with Indian culture which I deeply respect. But my part of the world also needs this epic very much And there have been no versions that could hold the interest of the ordinary person here, partly because a marriage of five men to one woman demands some of the treatment I have given.

California, US ELAINE N. ARON

UNSUPPORTIVE ROLE

It is disappointing that former chief minister Farooq Abdullah ("Hedging the Bets", March 15), after failing to curb subversive activities in Kashmir, is wasting his time and energy by criticising Governor Jagmohan instead of offering him a helping hand.

Varanasi

ABHINANDAN K. SINGH

A PITIABLE STATE

It is very disgusting to note that the status of Indian women abroad is no better than their counterparts here ("Domestic Despair", March 15). Since it is usually the intelligentsia who migrate to the US, this fact is even more horrifying.

Visakhapatnam

SURYA LAKSHMI

CONTESTED PRESENCE

In "Calling to Account" (February 28), it has been said that I was present in the meeting held in the parliament office of R.K. Dhawan on October 13, 1989. where the decision to present the St Kitts documents in the House was taken. would like to clarify that I was not present in this meeting. N.K. SENGUPTA New Delhi

■ A cross-check with official records and government sources confirms that Mr Sengupta was present. Hence, we stand by the story.

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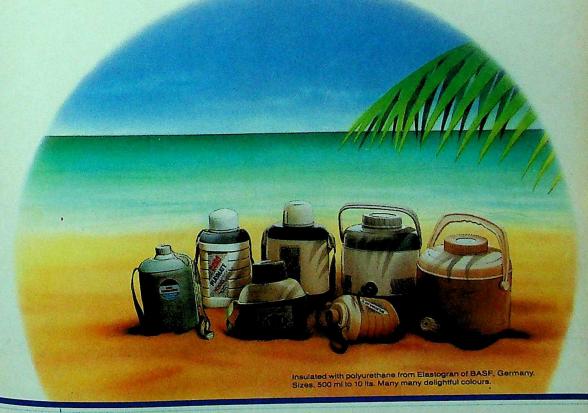


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Confusion of Consensus

RIME Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh likes to reiterate—each time he gets an opportunity—that even though he may appear to emit confused responses to resing political challenges, the confusion may, in effect, be shidden source of strength. That there is a method to his mfusion. He brought down Rajiv Gandhi. He amalgamated glanata Dal out of disparate political metals. Was this onfusion? he likes to ask.

Teasing words and perhaps apt food for thought for the regovernment evolution and synthesis of the anti-Congress ovement led by Singh. But now that he is prime minister he n no longer afford to take shelter behind any kind of onfusion. A leader must lead. A new raja chosen by the public ust.atleast.rule. But as Singh crosses the first 100 days of his rime ministership he seems to be sacrificing clarity and

cisiveness at the altar of conasus. The chaos of consensus. sit were, has become an obseson with him.

This is not to deride conensus. It is essential in a multierty state in which social and olitical interests clash in furious sharmony. But consensus is a olto carry the people with you the pursuit of a demonstrable olitical objective, of change. cannot become an end in itself. trannot become an excuse for he shirking of assertive leaderbip. Also, consensus is laudble, even desirable, in an atmothere in which political parties may have a difference of opinion approach but a basic commonness of purpose.

But what is served, for example, in seeking an all-party onsensus on Kashmir when the intentions of the Congress(I) adership are crassly partisan? When it is obvious to even the and casual observer of national politics that the erstwhile pling party, which to a large degree was responsible for aking a mess of that state, is using the Kashmir issue not in Farch of any permanent solution but for shovelling the muck left behind in the face of the new Government.

ltappeared, at first, that Singh's Government was at least aking a different course in Kashmir and that it would plement its programme with boldness and decisiveness. buthings are even messier after the all-party meeting and the ande lantrums of Rajiv Gandhi on the issue that have seemed deaden the responses of the Singh Government and aralyse its very political will. Wrong as he is, Rajiv Gandhi ousy schedule tems to fulminate with verve while V.P. Singh merely moos in response.

The same goes for Punjab. The National Front Governto same goes for Punjab. The National Flows appeared quite committed to reviving the political to reviving things in a Anner dec. To holding elections. To doing things in a hanner different from that of the previous government. But lithas achieved so far is to shove the wheel one more full, dous, consensus-centric circle.

This is also apparent in his dealing with his own party. Where does he stand, for example, on the debasement of Indian democracy in Meham? By his own side, by his professed, uncompromising worship of value-based politics? Or on the side of procrastination through a committee system? Surely, signals of confused leadership had something to do with his inability to rally his party to muster even a simple majority in the Lok Sabha on the constitutional amendment extending President's Rule in Punjab.

ECENT history should teach Singh that he has been Rsuccessful when he has acted on the basis of an existing national consensus rather than while creating a political one. The nation agrees, for example, that corruption and communalism must be battled. So he needed no politician's counsel

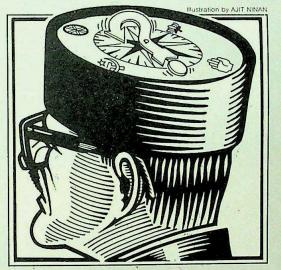
when he appointed inquiry commissions to probe defence contracts or when he acted swiftly to douse the communal flames being fanned during the first phase of the proposed construction of the Ram Janmabhoomi temple.

His best moments have come when he has acted decisively. He did not reach for consensus when he took steps to repeal the 59th Amendment. He did not seek Rajiv Gandhi's okay before he decided to rehabilitate the post-Operation Bluestar army deserters. He did not need Harkishen Singh Surjit's permission, or that of anybody even in his own party, when he decided to visit the Golden Temple. He simply went ahead and did what

a leader, elected by a popular mandate, should do. He led.

The non-use of power, perhaps, is as dangerous as the misuse of power. And Singh often appears too caught up within personal conundrums to use the powers that the people of this country have bestowed on him. A leader cannot escape from the responsibility of acting upon what he believes is right, and then carrying the people along. Consensus cannot be a substitute for clear-headed leadership in a country as full of complexities as is India. If the people voted for change during the last general election—change in policies, in the style of government functioning, in disciplining corrupt politicians, in electoral practices—then these very voters are bound to ask, well, where is the change?

True, Singh has an unenviable balancing act to perform in holding the Government together. But that does not mean he should duck tough action. All leaders have a limited time—as Rajiv Gandhi had in 1985—to ride against the system before the establishment closes in on them. Right now, while Singh still enjoys the newness of leadership-the public honeymoon-people will be inclined to support him when he takes decisive steps to stem the rot in his own party or steer away from the drift in Punjab and Kashmir. The longer he avoids head-on confrontations, the more time runs against him,

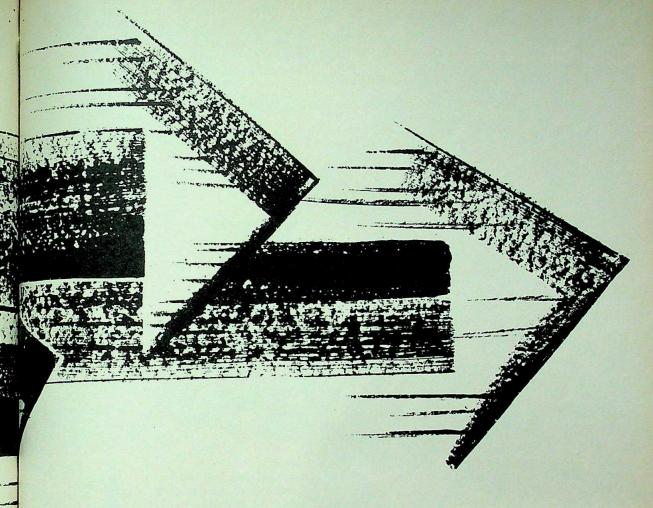


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'Hunted House'

 Indian politicians must be the most superstitious tribe in the universe-even Prime Minister V.P. Singh has supposedly delayed his shift to Race Course Road because he has been advised to await a more auspicious occasion. But it is the official residence of



another towering politician, Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal, that is currently the focus of superstition.

According to political pundits. Devi Lal's fate has been sealed politically and he will soon have to pack his bags. The reason? 1, Willingdon Crescent is jinxed as far as the political fortunes of its occupants are concerned. The Tau's troubles, they point out, started soon after he shifted into the house. Further, they produce a long list of previous occupants to prove their point that the house brought them bad luck: most had either resigned, been expelled or lost power.

Going by this apocryphal list, Devi Lal is in august company. The first on the impressive list is Rajkumari Amrit Kaur who had resigned from Nehru's cabinet. Others include T.T. Krishnamachari, Morarji Desai, A.K. Sen, Bansi Lal and V.C. Shukla. If, by some chance, Devi Lal does follow suit, it will be virtually impossible to find any politician willing to move into the 'hunted house', as political wags refer to it nowadays.

Paranoid Tau

 Whatever Devi Lal's fate may eventually be, the pressure building up against the Tau has added a new element to his colourful personalityparanoia, Normally a gregarious individual, who loves to hold forth on his rustic views without caring about the consequences, he has suddenly become over-cautious about what he says and to whom.

The trigger factor was Arun Shourie's front-page reproduction in the Indian Express of the telephonic exchange between the two in the wake of the Meham controversy. The exchange was highly damaging since it showed Devi Lal as a foulmouthed bully.

Thus, last fortnight, when Ram Jethmalani called on the Tau he was in for a rude shock. Obviously, Devi Lal still

Cartoons by AJIT NINAN



equates Jethmalani with the Indian Express and his instructions to his security staff were to search Jethmalani for any hidden tape-recorders. An indignant Jethmalani had to undergo the embarrassment of being security-checked before he gained an audience with Devi Lal.

Home Bound

 As is the case with most exclusive clubs, the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) believes in sticking together in support of its own. Thus the foreign office has seen no major shake-ups after the new Government's installation.

But the fact that many



senior IFS officials were closely identified with the Rajiv government means the threat still exists. So, the powerful IFS lobby has been attempting to find adequate postings even for those openly associated with the previous regime.

Last fortnight, the Civil Service Board-comprising Foreign Secretary S.K. Singh, Commerce Secretary S.P. Shukla and Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs Prakash Shah-listed G. Parthasarathy, joint secretary in the PMO under Rajiv, for the number two position at Moscow.

The two foreign service officials chose Parthasarathy on the grounds that his assignment had been cleared by the PMO. Shukla, however, raised an objection and the file was sent to Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral. The minister decided to check with the PMO about Parthasarathy only to be told that the PMO had not recommended anybody for foreign postings.

The result: Parthasarath, currently on leave, may have to wait a bit before he return to foreign diplomatic pasture

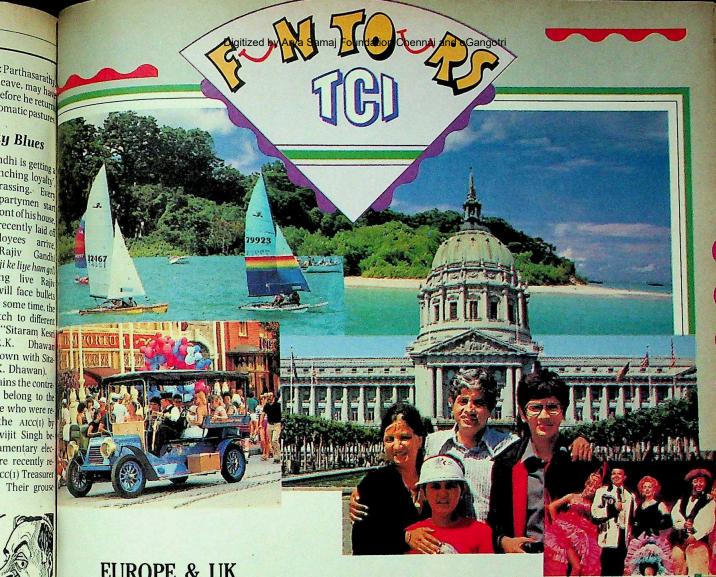
Loyalty Blues

Rajiv Gandhi is getting taste of 'unflinching loyalty' most embarrassing. Even morning as partymen stan collecting in front of his house, half a dozen recently laid of AICC(I) employees arrive shouting: "Rajiv Gandh zindabad, Rajivji ke liye hamgo khayenge."(Long live Rajjiv Gandhi. We will face bullets for him.) After some time. the 'loyalists' switch to different sloganeering: "Sitaram Kesti murdabad. R.K. Dhawan murdabad." (Down with Sitaram Kesri, R.K. Dhawan).

What explains the contradiction? They belong to the group of people who were recruited into the AICC(1) b Viswajit Prithvijit Singh before the parliamentary elections, and were recently retrenched by AICC(1) Treasurer Sitaram Kesri. Their grouse



against R.K. Dhawan is that he has not allowed them to present their case to Rajiv. No one knows whether Rajiv will gag the gang of six by reinstal. ing them or allow them to continue to break his morning peace with the slogans, which while lauding him denounce his Man-Friday.



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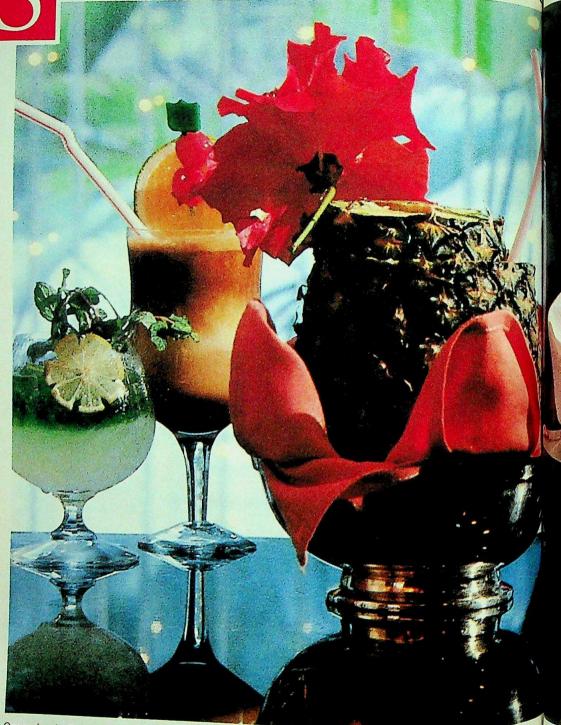
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We don't have a permanent coterie; that's why we have committees.

■ V.P. SINGH in Rajva Sabha

Meham has raised an important moral question for all of us and any impromise on this issue will not only expose us to ridicule in public mind but to make our claims of value-based politics sound hollow.

- YASHWANT SINHA, Janata Dal general secretary, in a letter to V.P. Singh
- The Congress(I) just can't afford to have an alliance with liabilities like Devi ■ BALRAM JAKHAR at a public meeting in Gurgaon
- The trouble with Morarji (Desai) is that his birthday comes only once in four ■ N. SANJIVA REDDY, former President, to former President Zail Singh in New Delhi
- India will always remain close to us.
 - NELSON MANDELA in The Illustrated Weekly of India
- The Janata Dal is like a polythene bag filled with water. A child can make any ape out of it.
 - GHULAM NABI AZAD, Congress(I) general secretary
- We will try to solve our problems in the democratic way but failing we will ■ V. PIRABHAKARAN in Jaffna
- I do know a George Bush, I know a George Sibul, but never any George ■ CHANDRASWAMY in India Abroad
- Sertain members of Parliament are allowed to come to the House carrying metre-long swords, I will also bring a carbine....Let Parliament become a ■ S.S. AHLUWALIA of the Congress(I) in Rajya Sabha
- The accident of royal birth is useful but you can be a king and still be a moron.
 - KARAN SINGH, former Indian ambassador to the US, in Life
- It was the ignorance of the people. They didn't know what I was doing. They ^{re} just thinking that I was bastardising my music.
 - RAVI SHANKAR in Newstrack
- I know I can't overtake Sridevi so what's the point in hanging around

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YOURS LAWFULLY

When it comes to making the law serve personal needs, there is none to beat the law-enforcers. For them the law is not just a lathi to beat others with, but also an instrument for getting their way, as a policeman in New Delhi showed.

Recently he and his lathi



took a walk around the capital's crowded Janpath area. He looked rather burdened by his task: to warn and pull up shopkeepers who had extended their counters to the pavements, inconveniencing pedestrians. So, he waved his lathi in front of the shopkeepers and tapped their counters menacingly.

But the intimidation was

not to last long. The lathi suddenly transformed itself into a magic wand and from nowhere appeared a ticket book for a filmstar night. The event had been organised to collect funds for a school to be built by the police in Delhi. The shop keepers had no option but to oblige the policeman—and be ticketed for his excesses.

TRAVEL TRAVAILS

■ If you'd thought cabs were prohibitively expensive, you'd better think again. In fact, travelling by a cyclerickshaw may be a lot more exorbitant. Particularly if you were to go by the recent experience of the Andhra Pradesh Minister for Sports, V. Hanumantha Rao.

When the minister took a cycle rickshaw from the Legislative Assembly to the Secretariat in Hyderabad, he was merely trying to make a statement against the fresh hike in petrol prices. But Rao's anger at the price rise was only fuelled further when the rickshaw puller refused to accept the Rs 10 that the minister offered him.



Apparently, the rickshaw puller mistook the minister for a film star as he was thronged by photographers clicking away furiously. So, he began to throw starry tantrums and demanded a lot more money than his usual rate. Left with no option, the minister gave in, and next day was seen back in the cheap comfort of his car.

COCKY CRIMINAL

There is no such thing as a perfect crime, as Sherlock Holmes would like us to believe. Evidently, that isn't elementary knowledge for some of the capital's criminals. Especially for this cocky burglar who struck repeatedly at the same house, successfully managing to give the police



the slip each time.

After a point he became so confident that he brazenly started warning his victims about the exact date and time when he was going to strike next. So sure was he of not getting caught that he actually called up one of his regular "clients" and told him the exact time when he was going to steal his VCR from right

under his very nose—from his coffee table.

Unfortunately for him, things were too good to last. He couldn't continue to outsmart the police with such sitters. His winning spree came to an end when he met his nemesis at the appointed time—a police sub-inspector making a pretty picture sitting on the VCR.

PREMATURE DEATH

■ Out West you have to book your own casket years in advance. Now it seems that the trend of preparing for your own funeral is catching on in India too. Witness a 70-year-old from Vishweshwarganj in Baharaich, Uttar Pradesh.

Even while he was still

alive and kicking, he organised his own funeral and cremated his photograph. And he certainly spared no effort to propitiate the gods so that he could attain *moksha*. For starters, several Brahmins were fed. Also, a Rs 2,000 samadhi was built. And as is the practice among some communities, a



nautanki dance was held in honour of a life that had been well lived.

Though he was deadly serious in his efforts to attain liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth his son didn't exactly share his sentiments. Thus the bizare ritual was suddenly called off—a sort of premature death.

ASININE ASSERTIONS

Not everybody in nawabi Lucknow seems to be riding a high horse. There are some people who are more than willing to descend to earth and monkey around a bit. Take, for example, this group of sweepers who found a unique way to protest to the



city administration.

In order to have their demands met, they rounded up some 250 donkeys and let them loose in the administration office. While some of the donkeys were made to sit on the officers' chairs, others were pushed into the elevator and sent upstairs. One enthusiastic person

even grabbed a telephone and hung it around a donkey's neck.

As a curious crowd gathered to watch this asinine spectacle, the hapless administration was left with no choice but to give in to the sweepers' demands which had been pending for donkey's years.

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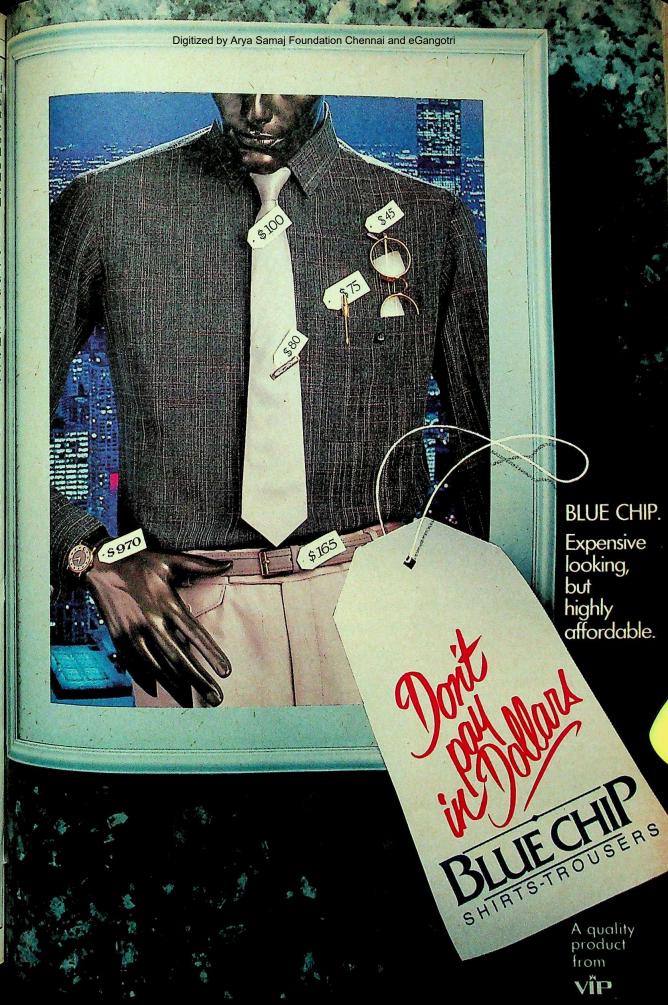
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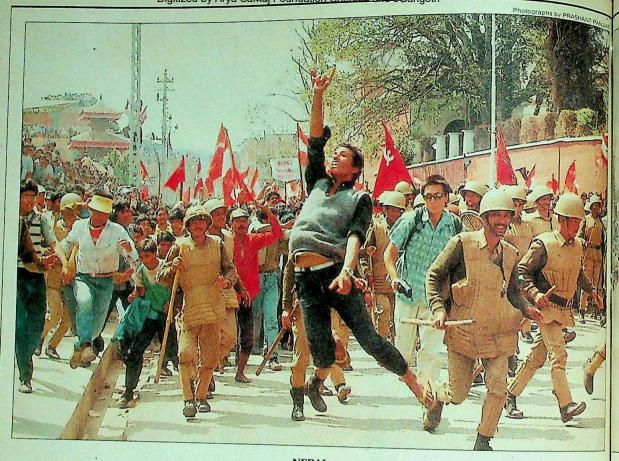
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NEPAL

Return to Democracy

With King Birendra finally giving in to the demand for democratic rights, the three-month-old agitation has achieved a major victory

HE end was anti-climactic. Just two days earlier, police and army units had cracked down on Nepal's snowballing pro-democracy movement with brutal force, gunning down demonstrators in Kathmandu's Durbar Square, even firing at the backs of fleeing agitators. Estimates of the number killed ranged from 40 to 300. To most observers, that was clearly a signal that the man who occupied the ornate building barely 500 yards away at the end of Durbar Square, King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah, had decided to take a tough line against the movement demanding the restoration of multi-party democracy.

Then, close to midnight on April 9, the three-month-long confrontation ended as abruptly as it had begun. In a

King Birendra: cornered



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Demonstration (left); and celebrations the king gave in: success at last

dace communique announced on telesion and radio, the king, in a dramatic mbdown, gave in to the major demands the agitationists led by leaders of the allawed Nepali Congress (NC) and the aited Left Front comprising seven comunist parties. The palace announceent conceded the major demand of the ovement, namely the return of democy to the tiny Himalayan kingdom after ap of 30 years. The palace announced atthe word 'partyless' would be deleted Mepal's Constitution. It also paved Way for the formation of an interim remment and the abrogation of the act aning political parties in Nepal.

For the opposition leaders of the promovement, many of whom we endured protracted jail sentences, ture or exile under Birendra's autodicmonarchy, it was a dazzling victory. even though the price had been an unknown number of people been killed, wounded, or incarcerated since the movement staged its lastditch offensive starting February 16-for Nepal, and for its embattled King, the significance is overwhelming. Leaders of the main political parties responded by immediately calling off the agitation that was threatening to become more violent and widespread with each passing day.

Y giving in to the demands, Birendra has managed to buy himself time for necessary political manoeuvering. In the process he also saved his teetering monarchy. What clearly influenced him to change his obdurate stand was the kind of popular support the pro-democracy movement had attracted-thousands of men, women and children had flooded the streets of Kathmandu on April 6 in a massive show of strength while similar demonstrations had been staged in other parts of the world's only Hindu Kingdom.

For Birendra, however, what was an even ruder shock was that the royal family was the main target of the demonstrators' wrath. All through last fortnight, the Kathmandu Valley reso-

nated with cries of "Beere-chor, desh chhod" (Birendra, the thief, leave this country) and "Swashne pamfu, longe lamfu" (the wife is fat, the husband foolish). As the people openly voiced their contempt for the king-accusing him of rampant self-aggrandisement (see box) the monarchy had at first hit back with a fresh wave of brutal repression.

Several thousand people were arrested; long curfews were imposed; and police firing claimed dozens of lives. Undeterred, the people in turn voluntarily observed black-outs at night protesting against the clampdown, and declared the suburbs of Patan and Kirtipur "liberated zones". Exuberant NC activists went a step further and christened the two places "the People's Republic of Patan and Kirtipur".

If that had a touch of the grandiose to it, the reasons were not far to seek. The support the agitationists had attracted was unprecedented in both its scale and reach. Taxis, buses and trolley cars disappeared in Kathmandu, rendering any declarations of official curfew redundant. Work at government offices had ground

By giving up his obdurate stand, King Birendra has not only succeeded in restoring peace in Nepal but also saved his teetering position.

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Under the changed system, Nepal's monarchy will be reduced from one having absolute authority to one having merely a constitutional status.

Ganesh Man Singh (left): cry freedom

to a virtual standstill; the electricity board had resorted to a pen down strike; pilots of the Royal Nepal Airlines Corporation had struck work, going so far as to demonstrate on the tarmac of Tribhuvan International Airport; and other professionals like doctors, lawyers and teachers had also risen in protest.

There was also a run on the banks. Alarmed by reports that officials were about to flee the country, people in their thousands queued up at banks to withdraw their money. The mounting anger and determination of the agitationists were further fuelled by the arrest of scores of intellectuals participating in a symposium on the prevailing crisis, among them Debendra Raj Pandey, acting president of the Human



MONARCHY

Royal Romp

HE most remarkable feature of the pro-democracy movement has been the unprecedented attack on the monarchy. Cartoons, graffiti and slogans deriding the royal family are ubiquitous in Kathmandu. One slogan: "Pamfa Devi hai hai, Birendra bye bye" (down with Pamfa Devi, bye bye to Birendra). Why is Queen Aisharaya called 'Pamfa Devi'? The popular explanation is that a large number of secret bank accounts exist in the name of 'Pamfa Devi' which is actually the queen's pseudonym.

The queen's Imelda Marcos-type image is hardly misplaced. She is head of the all-powerful Samajik Seva Samanway Parishad (sssp), without whose clearance no professional or social body can be formed. In fact, people believe that it is the queen who rules Nepal. Cartoons showing the king's lips sealed by a lock with the keys in the queen's hands are common. More recent ones describe the royal couple as Mr and Mrs Ceausescu.

The royal tentacles spread far. The Nepal Children's Society is headed by the Queen Mother; the Nepal Red Cross by Helen Shah, wife of the king's uncle; the Family Planning Association by Preksha Shahi, the king's

sister-in-law; the Cancer Society by Jayanti Shahi, a cousin.

The king's eldest sister, Shanti Singh, heads the Leprosy Mission and the Nepal T.B. Preventive Association and owns several industries. Kharga Vikram Shahi, husband of another sister, is de facto vice-chancellor of Tribhuvan University. Nir Shahi, one of his brothers, is director of Nepal TV. Another, Lalita Bikram Shahi, is chief of civil aviation. The husband of the king's third sister, Mohan Bahadur Shahi, owns a host of industries.

Queen Aisharaya: all-powerful



The two sisters of Queen Aisharaya, Koman and Preksha, are married to two of the king's brothers. Together, they own the Soaltee Hotel, Himal Tea Estate, a truck-manufacturing unit, a biscuit unit, match factories and the Salt Trading Corporation. Said a prominent intellectual in Kathmandu: "They behave more like traders than royalty."

The privy purses and grants to the royal family amounted to a staggering 44.4 million Nepalese rupees this year, 33 per cent more than last year. This excludes expenditure on the upkeep of the palace and on the king's frequent months-long "inspection tours", which officials put at over 1 lakh Nepalese rupees a day.

Worse, various members of the royal family have been linked to scandals including drug trafficking, smuggling, violations of foreign exchange rules and even the disappearance of two girls from a tourist resort. Many of the scandals are believed to have been leaked by Dhirendra, a brother of the king who has been divested of royal privileges and now lives in the UK.

A recent incident was a telling commentary on the status of the rulers of the world's only Hindu kingdom. One demonstrator in Kathmandu climbed up on another and smashed the royal emblem on a hoarding. Policemen simply looked on.

-UTTAM SENGUPTA in Kathmandu



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Compounding the crisis is the economic situation: the prices of rice and kerosene have doubled, public transport is expensive, banks are under strain.

Rights Organisation of Nepal (HURON), pron Prasad Acharya, member of the Rashtriya Panchayat, and eminent scholar and poet Anand Dev Bhatt.

Amid the growing chaos, King Birendra had made a desperate, yet feeble, attempt on April 6 to stem the tide of antagonism. His five-minute address to the nation was reconciliatory. Regreting the loss of life and property, the King declared he had dismissed prime minister Marich Man Singh Shrestha. He added that the new ministry would consult "people holding different political views"; a constitutional reforms commission would be set up for suggesting "practical reforms"; and a judicial inquiry would be held to look into the police firings.

In tone and content, seldom before had a royal proclamation been so conciliatory. Said an audibly relieved Shailendra Kumar Upadhayaya, the foreign minister who resigned the day the Indian delegation arrived for talks with the Nepalese Government: "The new Prime

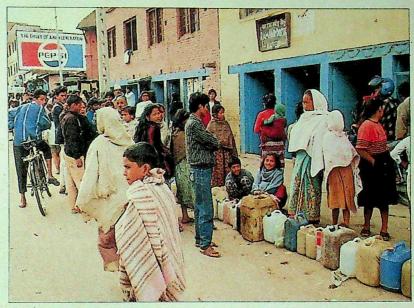
Minister, Lokendra Bahadur Chand, is a man with an open mind and if he wants I'll be willing to join the ministry." In the meantime, the new prime minister exuded confidence. He said: "I am optimistic that the situation will improve soon."

His optimism was not misplaced. Protracted negotiations started between King Birendra and leaders of the NC and the United Left Front including the Nc's supreme leader Ganesh Man Singh (currently in hospital), G.P. Koirala, general secretary of the NC, K.P. Battrai, the NC's acting president and four senior leaders of the Left Front. A day later, Nepal's unpopular and palace-controlled Panchayat system was abolished by Birendra.

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vt. Ltd. 380 009 Theoretically, anybody could be elected to the 140-member Panchayat. What happened in practice was far different. A panchayat member had to be sponsored by one of several government-sponsored organisations and renounce all party affiliations. Moreover, the Con-



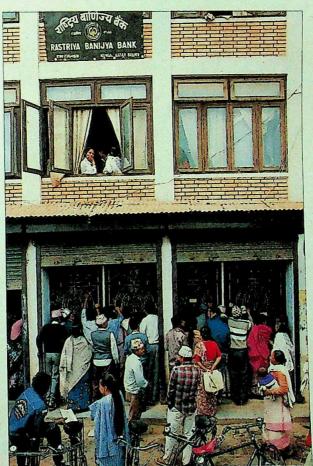
People lining up for kerosene; and (below) queueing to withdraw their bank deposits: panic

stitution decreed that there could be no discussion on any act of the royal family in the Panchayat. The Upper House, in

any case, had all its members nominated by the King.

The powers of the King, consequently, were absolute and autocratic. Now, under the changing system. Nepal's monarchy will be reduced to a constitutional status from one of absolute authority. For Birendra, it is a serious loss of face. But if he has accepted it, it is because the alternative was even graver—the possible loss of his throne.

That was clearly on the cards as the events of April 6 had revealed. In the afternoon, a 100,000-strong crowd assembled in the open stadium opposite Bir Hospital. The crowd had been disciplined, though boisterous. But one section was straining to break the police cordon and reach the palace gates. The police panicked and began lobbing tear-gas shells. But with the wind favouring the demonstrators, the gas wafted back towards the policemen, blinding them, and forcing them to retreat. Sensing victory, the crowd chased them right up to Durbar Square, barely 500 yards



Nepal's internal crisis is far from over as the profusion of political leaders. after years of being outlawed, will now battle each other for power.

away from the palace.

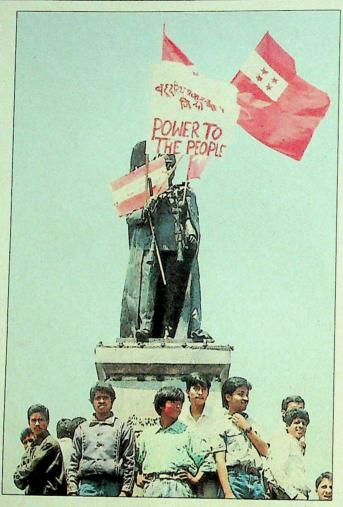
Picking up stones and bricks, they defiantly charged the police-who opened fire. The army moved in soon after to throw a protective umbrella around the palace—the fashionable Durbar Square was crawling with soldiers in battle fatigues armed with selfloading rifles. But pitched battles continued sporadically all over Kathmandu. The premises of the government-owned newspaper publishing house, Gorkha Patra Sangsthan were ransacked. The corporation building was arsoned. Rumours that several hundred persons-diplomatic channels claimed 300-had been killed were beginning to assume an aura of authenticity. Among the dead were two foreigners caught in the crossfire.

Adding to the discomfiture of the palace, were signs of disgruntlement in the police ranks. Reports suggested that several hundred policemen had been arrested for defying orders while

many others were seeking to resign or proceed on leave.

What had started as an innocuous pro-democracy agitation had now turned into a mass movement. And even as the army remained loyal to the king-"We have eaten the king's salt and must repay his debt," said a tired Gorkha soldier outside Hotel de' Annapurna—a civil war-like situation was building up.

Fuelling the fire was the economic situation. The rate of inflation is as high as 40 per cent. Prices of rice, pulses and kerosene have more than doubled, public transport has become more expensive and the banking system has been put to severe strain by the import-spree indulged in by the Government. Said a prominent industrialist in Kathmandu: "Business decisions cannot be taken emotionally. The Government has set a classic example of cutting its nose to spite India by importing stuff from other



Pro-democracy banners on late King Mahendra's statue: victory

countries that could have been bought at a cheaper rate from India."

ACED with the mounting economic derisis—and an unprecedented attack on the monarchy-Birendra eventually had little choice. His April 6 crackdown had received widespread criticism from the international community-with the stark exception of New Delhi-further adding to Nepal's isolation. Internally, the situation was clearly heading for a bloody civil war and with large sections of the police in sympathy with the agitation, Birendra had run out of options.

But Nepal's internal crisis is still far from over. Thirty years of being outlawed means that the profusion of political leaders will now have to battle each

other for the trappings of power. Though the Ncisin political dominance, the United Left Front has also made remarkable strides in recent years, emerging as a major force in local politics. But there are also sharp ideological differences between the left parties and the NC. In addition, there are clear schisms within the NC and relations between the three top men-Ganesh Man Singh, Koirala and Battrai-are edgy at best.

The King's concessions also fall short of the agitationists' demandsthe Rashtriya Panchayat is yet to be dissolved. Says Shahana Pradhan, a prominent communist leader: "We have won only half the battle and the struggle still has to be waged." Adds Ganesh Man Singh: "The more difficult task lies ahead. There is a heavier responsibility thrust upon us now." The real test of Birendra's intentions will be whether or not he announces the holding of free and democratic elections. Says K.P. Battrai:

"It will be up to His Majesty to declare the elections.'

There is also the fear that the king may have given in merely to buy time. Observers feel that the palace ploy may be part of a strategy aimed at dividing the Opposition so that no single party achieves a majority in the elections, thus enabling him to retain power.

Now that the initial storm has blown over, whatever compromises have to be made will only emerge at the end of the current round of negotiations and the formation of an interim government in itself a tricky task. But for the people of Nepal, such issues have been brushed aside as the rejoicing continues late into the night and the heady taste of freedom mingles with the cordite from the firecrackers. After 30 years, democracy is back in Nepal. For now, that is more than enough cause for celebration.

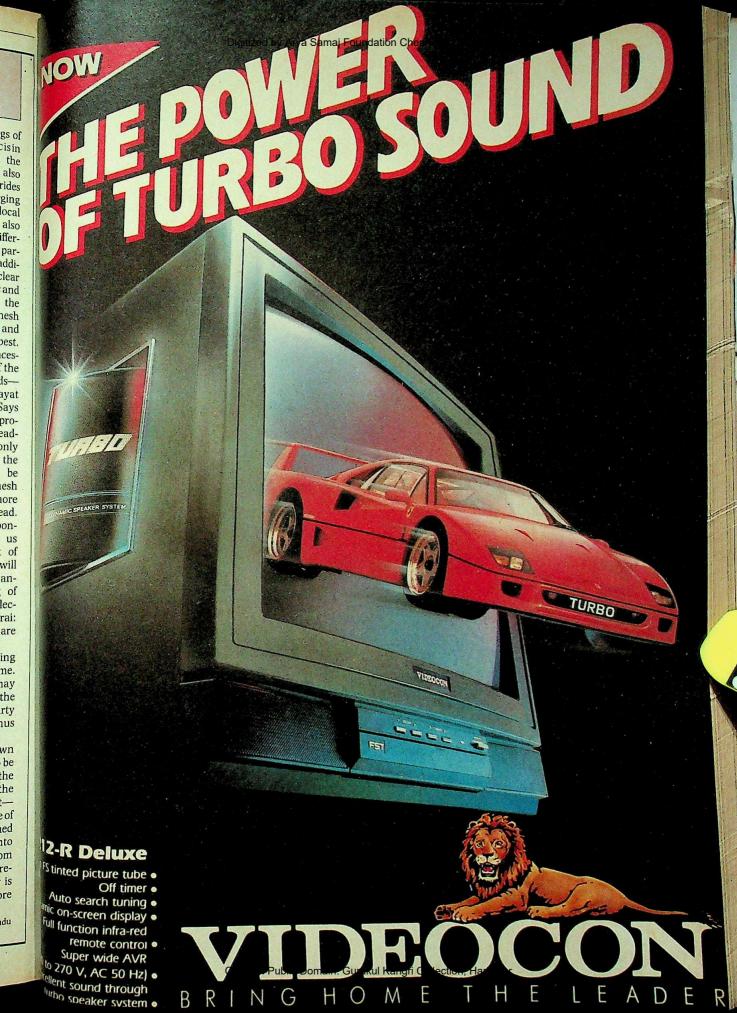
-UTTAM SENGUPTA in Kathmandu

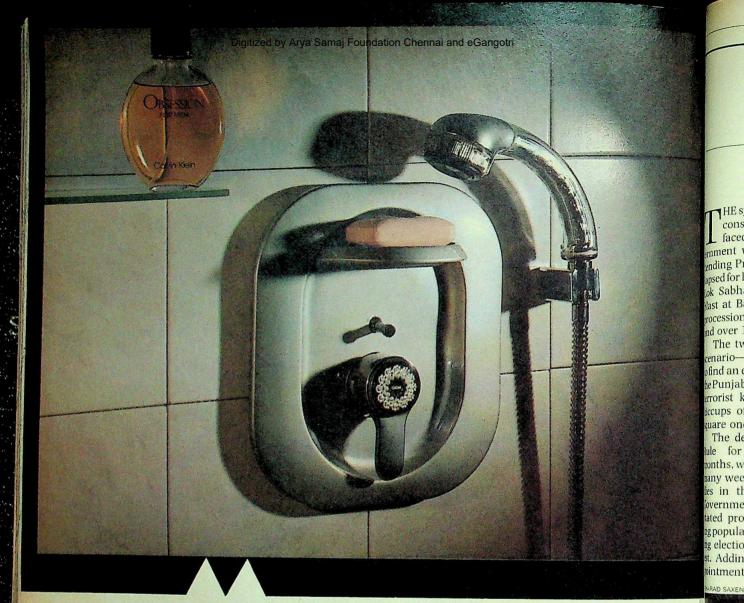
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A Losing Battle

The Punjab situation is back to square one despite the Government's belated attempts to chalk out a new strategy

HE symbols were self-evident. The constitutional embarrassment faced by the National Front Govmment when the crucial bill for exending President's Rule in Punjab colapsed for lack of adequate support in the ok Sabha. And, the powerful bomb last at Batala during a Ram Navami rocession on April 3, which left 33 dead nd over 100 injured.

The two incidents reflected a grim cenario—the failure of the Government find an effective political tool to tackle he Punjab crisis and the alarming rise in morist killings. Punjab, after initial iccups of hope, was clearly back to ware one.

The decision to extend President's

tule for another six onths, which came after nany weeks of dithering. ies in the face of the wernment's publicly tated promise of restorgpopular rule and holdg elections at the earlist. Adding to the disappintment was the fact

RAD SAXENA

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The extension of President's Rule in the state has drawn flak from the Akalis. Many are doubting the Government's ability to solve the crisis.



that extension of President's Rule comes within months of the much trumpeted repeal of the draconian 59th Amendment.

The eventual passing of the bill in the Lok Sabha, supported by the Congress(I) was, in retrospect. but a minor step in the

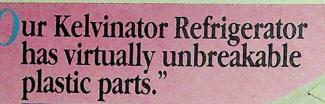
long haul that lies ahead in Punjab. The most telling example is the level of chaos and tension in Batala where curfew had to be imposed to prevent a repeat of 1986 when communal tension resulted in villagers laying protracted siege to Batala town. Union Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and Punjab Governor Nirmal Kumar Mukarji faced hostile crowds at Batala and Amritsar, where some of the injured were admitted. The grimness of the situation was highlighted by yet another blast in a Delhi-bound bus two days later.

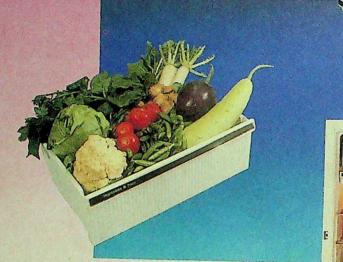
In a desperate bid to contain the worsening situation, Prime Minister V.P. Singh summoned the Punjab governor to Delhi for a meeting to assess the situation, attended by Mufti, newlyappointed Chief Secretary of Punjab S.L. Kapur and Director-General of Police K.P.S. Gill. At the meeting, Mukarji admitted that there had been a



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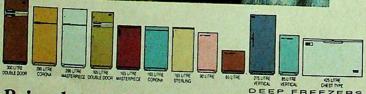
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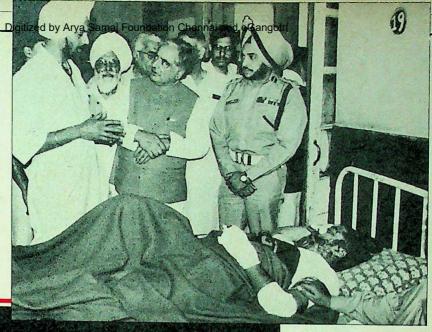
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forces (PMI strategical Police stat oper cent increase in terrorist activity during the past three months.

In a separate note submitted to the avernment, he stated: "The backding on the anti-terrorist front is on a count of the deterioration of the model of the security forces in the post-ection period. Dilution of the thrust on the part of the paramilitary forces, confined flow of weapons and explosives from across the border and political incertainty before the assembly ections."

At the April 6 meeting, V.P. Singh approved in principle a time-framed action plan' to curb terrorism substanially to prepare the ground for fair and eaceful conduct of assembly elections

nithin six months (see ix). A number of stratgy sessions of senior offiials of the Centre and tate were held in Delhi and Chandigarh to hamer out details of the 'acion plan'. It was also deided that the Government all launch a simulta-



The differences between the Punjab political leadership, indicating that it is in no shape to face the militants, have added to the sense of despair.

Mufti with victims of the Batala blast at an Amritsar hospital

neous diplomatic initiative against Pakistan.

However, the exten-

ANTI-TERRORIST STRATEGY

Tough Tack

A composite anti-terrorist administrative and political strategy has been evolved by the Government for the next six months. This time-bound "Action Plan" will unfold in three parts.

The first part relates to containing and curbing terrorism in about two months' time. It is estimated that there are 178 hardcore and 733 nonhardcore terrorists (as on April 1) divided into 85 gangs. Approximately 728 weapons—AK-47, AK-54, AK-74 and AK-94—are in the hands of the terrorists. In order to neutralise the gangs, the plan envisages sharpening the anti-terrorist drive by a series of measures: instead of concentrating on protection of individual targets, it is proposed to improve the security environment to prevent terrorists from attacking soft targets. Wasteful deployment will be reduced to maintain the maximum striking force of the Punjab Police for anti-terrorist work. Also, a strike force of the paramilitary forces (PMF) and Punjab Police will be strategically located in the worst-hit police stations and villages.

To streamline border control and intercept trans-border movement, the Punjab Police and PMF will be deployed beyond the Border Security Force (BSF) border positions. The six routes used by terrorists to cross over from Pakistan which have been identified for plugging are: Tash-Paharipur area in Gurdaspur Sector; Panjgaria-Madhai Cheema Sector in Gurdaspur and Amritsar districts; Burj-Fatehpur Sector, Rania Sector and Khemkaran Sector (all in Amritsar District); and Mamdot-Jalalabad Sector in Ferozepur district. It is proposed to impose dusk-to-dawn curfew in the 3-kilometre border belt.

Other measures envisaged under the first part are:

► The PMF will be put under the direct operational control of the director-general of police, Punjab. It is also proposed to carry out an operational reorientation of the PMF.

► Informants, or 'identifiers' will be increasingly used for operations against top terrorists.

▶ .Village Volunteer Force (vvF) will be developed by providing weapons to selected villagers.

► The weaponry of the Punjab Police will be upgraded. The Punjab Government has made a demand for 10,000 self-loading rifles (SLRS) to

phase out the antiquated .303s and also for some rapid-fire rifles to counter the AK-47.

The second phase relates to countering the "ideological subversion of militants". The administration will make its presence felt in the rural areas to remove the impression that militant rule is absolute there. Steps will be taken to tackle subversion in schools and prevent gurdwaras located in border areas from being used for subversion, mobilisation and indoctrination of villagers. The most important element of the second phase relates to tackling the "mercenary angle of terrorism" (about 2,000 criminals in border areas alone are engaged in extortions and kidnappings). The finance wing of the state Government will be probing the mushrooming of the finance companies which are the auxillaries of the extortion racket, and channelise the money.

The third part of the plan, relates to "reform and rehabilitation" of misguided youth. During this phase, steps will be taken to arrange surrender of terrorists and intensify mass contacts in the countryside. Though such plans, like Operation Mousetrap, have been tried in the past, they have not been able to make a dent.

-KANWAR SANDHU

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sion of President's Rule has drawn flak from political parties in Punjab. Said Akali Dal (Mann) President Simranjit Singh Mann: "We accuse the ruling party and the Opposition of thwarting the people's verdict in the Lok Sabha elections and taking away their democratic rights." He later added: "It will be difficult for the Sikh leadership to contince the youth about the desirability of adopting constitutional methods for the fulfilment of their aspirations."

Prakash Singh Badal, who addressed a series of rallies during the past fortaght, expressed similar sentiment: "We have started feeling disappointed with the new Government." The President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), Gurcharan Singh Tohra, also urged the prime minister to make a unilateral announcement on

Punjab. But many have begun to lose faith in V.P. Singh's ability to solve the Punjab issue. Said Akali Dal (Badal) kader Sukhjinder Singh: "V.P. Singh seems to have no realistic idea on Punjab. Moreover, he is under so much pressure from all sides."

Adding to the sense of despair are the differences

between the Punjab political leadership. Mann and Badal are engaged in a verbal war. In any event, Mann and his party are fast losing support and are in danger of being sidelined, making the Government's task of starting a political diabgue that much more difficult. Even the Badal group's attempts to make a comeback in state politics have fallen far short of expectations. The Badal group is also facing serious internal strife and it is unlikely that leaders like Jagdev Singh Talwandi, Tohra, Amarinder Singh and Sukhjinder Singh will share the stage with Badal for any length of time.

Moreover, the sope and the Sikh dergy too are locked in an unseemly controversy. The Akal Takht chief, barshan Singh Ragi objected to certain disparaging remarks made by Tohra and resigned. Later, the five head priests isked Tohra to apologise. All these developments indicate that the current political leadership in Punjab is in no shape to face the militants should elections be called in the state.

The Mann group has its share of eculiar problems. The party is afflicted by an ongoing power struggle between the families of the late Bhindranwale and his protege, Amrik Singh. This is manifesting itself in the form of infight-



There is a growing feeling that unless the governor is changed, the police will not be able to adopt a hard line against the terrorists.

ing in the All India Sikh Students' Federation (AISSF). The Rajinder Singh Mehta faction, close to the Bhindran-wale family, has accused Manjit Singh of having a hand in the murder of AISSF leader Harminder Singh Sandhu.

HE more serious aspect of the tussle is that the two warring factions have not hesitated to secure the support of the terrorist organisations. This is bound to intensify the warfare among the militants. Of the 80 terrorists killed last month, at least 45 were killed in inter-gang rivalry.

All this could neutralise the new measures being taken by the governor. The April 6 meeting did make some progress as far as deciding on a definite course of action. Said an official: "It has been decided that the Government's support to anti-terrorist operations will be expressed in the most unequivocal terms and proper backing to the police will be ensured."

Administratively too, there have been some belated changes. A third adviser to the governor, P.S. Kohli, has been appointed and the state has a new chief secretary in S.L. Kapur. Also about a dozen police officers from outside the state are to be inducted.

Agitated crowd demonstrates against Mukarji

Besides, the Government is proposing to constitute advisory committees, not only at the state level as announced by V.P. Singh last month but

also at the district levels. Meanwhile, the governor has become more visibly active in trying to restore the credibility of the Government. He has made public two inquiries which were ordered against police action, within a week of the reports having been submitted.

However, there is a growing feeling in Punjab that Mukarji is the wrong man for the job. Police officers say unless the governor is changed, the police will not be able to adopt a hard line. Akali leaders, of course, continue to harp on the need to dismantle the 'repressive machinery' and the rise in terrorist-related violence has eclipsed all else.

In a hard-hitting editorial, the leading vernacular daily of the region, *Punjab Kesari*, stated last fortnight: "The incidents of violence at regular intervals are the direct result of the wrong policies of the new Government at the Centre and the new governor in Punjab."

Political observers feel that waiting for terrorism to be curbed before commencing political initiatives seems to be the continuing policy; a policy that has been tantamount to giving the whip hand to the terrorists. Unless that policy is radically altered, all the action plans in the world will be of little use in tackling the Punjab problem.—KANWAR SANDHU

IANATA DAL

Inner Battles

Challenges to the ruling coalition's cohesion

AFTER a winter of wins, the ruling Janata Dal seems to be settling down for a summer of discontent. Hardly had the Tau's tantrums tapered off when yet another crisis engulfed the party. Last fortnight Prime Minister V.P. Singh's credibility and his ability to keep the fledgling ruling coalition together faced a fresh challenge. What was predictable was the source of the threat: none other than Chandra Shekhar, the sulking Rajput leader from Uttar Pradesh and V.P. Singh's sworn political foe (see box).

Coming hot on the heels of the Devi Lal-Om Prakash Chautala fracas, the Chandra Shekhar episode exposed, espe-



cially when seen in tandem with the way the Janata Dal has been handling issues both within and without Parliament, that even after running the country for over four months the ruling party lacks cohesion. For a party that moved like a jugger, anby the can aut against the Congress(I), it is todaying ally, the party and debilitating state of inertia—so critical stala, unthat there hardly seems to be anyone silents who willing to implement even the decisions can be to

CHANDRA SHEKHAR

Ringing a Warning

T was the master of controversies at his very best. Barely had the Janata Dal recovered from the embarrassment heaped upon it by Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal when Chandra Shekhar dropped a bombshell.

At the end of an interview with Pritish Nandy, editor of the *Illustrated Weekly of India*. Chandra Shekhar asked Nandy to switch off the tape-recorder. Then followed an outburst against the National Front Government's morality. Chandra Shekhar said his phone was tapped and his rooms were bugged. Though off the record, the weekly carried the remarks, leaving the Government with a major controversy on its hands and a Congress(I) attack to contend with.

The first rumblings of the controversy came last month when Janata Party MP Subramanian Swamy asked Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed whether his phone was tapped.

The Mufti termed his fears "baseless" saying the Government had given instructions not to tap politicians' phones.

A few days later, a Janata Dal MP and Chandra Shekhar protege, Subodh Kant Sahai, met the Mufti to voice Chandra Shekhar's fears that his telephone conversations were being intercepted. The Mufti denied the charge saying that such a sensitive thing couldn't occur in his ministry without his sanction.

Then came the Weekly interview that set off the storm.

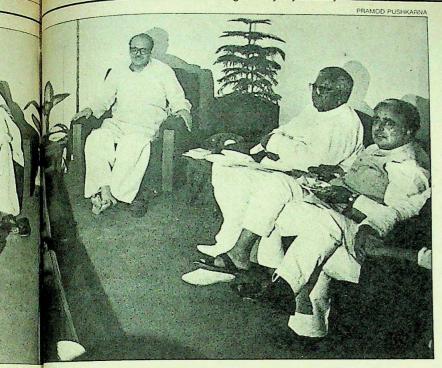
Later, talking to INDIA TODAY, Chandra Shekhar said his friends in the Government had told him about the tapping. Another friend procured a telephone debugging device to demonstrate that the two phones at his South Avenue Lane residence were tapped. Also, electronic signals could be detected in his room, suggesting bugging, though he could not trace the source. "I know all governments use these tactics."

Chandra Shekhar fulminated, "but this one has really stooped low. Why put my family under surveillance?"

But with the Congress(I) waiting for an issue to embarrass the Government the matter was not so easily buried. Earlier, a similar controversy had brought down the Ramakrishna Hegde government in Karnataka. In a debate in Parliament, the party demanded the resignation of V.P. Singh. Declared Swamy: "I am investigating the whole affair. This will rock the Government."

The Mufti was away touring Punjab and it was Parliamentary Affairs and Information Minister P. Upendra who stated on behalf of the prime minister that no politician was under surveillance. But he promised that the CBI would probe Chandra Shekhar's charge. And, he added, phone-tapping by the Congress(I) government too would be investigated by the CBI.

Within the Janata Dal, many are critical of Chandra Shekhar for playing into the Congress(I)'s hands. Some of his friends say that disgrunted elements were taking advantage of his altipathy towards V.P. Singh. There is take about Chandra Shekhar's getting upset



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for expanding the Union Cabinet, and unable to involve senior party members in organisational matters.

Even the party's all-powerful Political Affairs Committee (PAC) hasn't been able A PAC meeting: state of inertia

to implement its decision on Meham because no one wants to bell the cat. For example, last fortnight the PAC decided that Chautala be asked to quit the chief ministership of Haryana. Orissa Chief Minister Biju Patnaik was asked to convey the PAC's decision to Devi Lal, but he could not. Earlier, Textile Minister Sharad Yadav had been entrusted with the task of extracting Chautala's resignation, but he too could do little. Admits Subodh Kant Sahai, a former student leader and now a party general secretary: "Now is the time to consolidate and ensure proper coordination. If we ignore ground realities, we will do so only at our own peril.'

The Janata Dal imperiled its credibility when it failed to ensure the presence in Parliament of even 100 of its 142 MPs at the time of introducing the constitutional amendment bill seeking extension of President's Rule in Punjab. Not only the MPs, even senior ministers like Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal and Industry Minister Ajit Singh were absent. The bill suffered a humiliating defeat. Claimed Ajit Singh later: "I ran for the House as soon as I received the information. But I found the doors closed on me."

The prime minister and the home

PLEASE STOP BUGGING ME!

because the Government was proceeding against his friends like Chandraswamy and the Ambanis, and that it was Swamy who egged Chandra Shekhar on. Said Sahai: "Chandra Shekharji is a sensitive man. If he has made a charge, the Government should come out clean and tell the truth. It is a serious matter."

But Chandra Shekhar himself was not taking the matter so seriously. When сы Director Rajendra Shekhar rang up his Bhondsi farmhouse to invite him to make a statement to a joint director, he said he had "nothing more to say on the matter". "I didn't want to make it a public issue," he explains. "But as it has come out in the open and the Government has committed itself to discontinuing the practice, the matter should end here. What can the CBI do in this?"

Clearly, Chandra Shekhar had opted to back out from the controversy, possibly because he did not have evidence to clinch his charge. Nevertheless, he has succeeded in embarrassing the Government on an issue involving moral values. One more ring of warning for a government that prides itself on its value-based politics.

-PANKAJ PACHAURI

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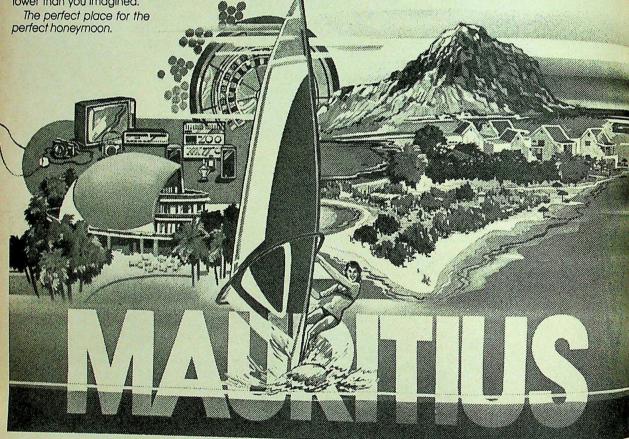
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The Janata
Dal is unable
to get rid of
Om Prakash
Chautala even
after the highpowered PAC
decided to ask
him to quit.

minister sought postpone-

ment of the bill to Friday on the plea that the Government was negotiating with Simranjeet Singh Mann about the possibility of his being sworn in as member. But no one pointed out to the party leaders that Friday was a bad day for ensuring maximum participation since most leave for their home towns.

True enough, when the whip was issued next morning over 100 MPs had left the capital. Though earlier, 303 members supporting the Government had signed the attendance register, only 154 were present just five minutes before voting was to take place. A dejected Upendra later offered to quit, owning moral responsibility.

Lok Sabha officials said the ruling party could have saved the situation by setting the voting postponed by raising some procedural questions. But the

Janata Dal lacked all expertise in parliamentary manipulation. Says Santosh Bhartiya, a Janata Dal MP from Uttar Pradesh: "Most of us are new to this game. We need to monitor ourselves more closely after this fiasco."

HE most glaring failure of the ruling party, however, is its inability to spell out a clear policy on sensitive issues like Kashmir and Punjab. The consensus approach has led to little clarity, and with the party's views on the issues being hazy, MPs and state units are keeping quiet, unable to counter Congress(I) attacks. For example, the prime minister decided to extend President's Rule in Punjab because all other parties forced him to accept this proposal. But when the bill couldn't be passed due to lack of quorum, almost all the Janata Dal

MPs pleaded with the Government to hold elections in Punjab. In the case of Kashmir too, most party MPs favoured strong action against the secessionists, but V.P. Singh kept the door for negotiations open.

Senior party leaders try and play down these shortcomings. Says Yashwant Sinha, a party general secretary: "Some of us are still learning the ropes. But we have the people's goodwill. And when it comes to the crunch we are together like a rock." Party leaders quote the success of the

party's nominees in the Rajya Sabha elections without the loss of a single vote. And the fact that no party MP or chief minister was drawn into the public controversy over the Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar issue. In fact, Devi Lal, realising his eccentric behaviour was earning him enemies, has even attempted reconciliation with Ajit Singh.

V.P. Singh is now resolved on a course of decentralisation. In an attempt to rally the party rank and file behind him, he wrote to all party MPs asking them to elect a new party president and other office-bearers at the Centre and the state level. The move paid off right away as Devi Lal resigned as chairman of the party's parliamentary board, accepting the principle of one-man one-post. V.P. Singh has also directed the PAC to meet every Monday; and a cut-off date—October 5—has been announced for party

elections. The V.P. Singh plan, claim insiders, is aimed at committing all party factions to a firm plan of action. V.P. Singh told INDIA TODAY: "I firmly believe in collective leadership and consensus. Decisions must not be thrust on people, they should be evolved through their participation."

But flabby, unproductive consensus can lead to the erosion of people's faith and party credibility. V.P. Singh has to skirt that trap, even as he handles the twin threat of Devi Lal and Chandra Shekhar with all the finesse at his command.

-PRABHU CHAWLA

The
Parliamentary
Affairs Minister
Upendra offered
to quit after the
Government
failed to get the
requisite number
of MPs to back
the Punjab bill.

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GUIARAT

Dark Clouds

Communal riots engulf state



THIS year augurs to match the 1985 record of communal clashes in Gujarat. Barely had the Ianata Dal-BIP coalition Government, led by Chimanbhai Patel,

completed a month in office when a communal conflagration spread with lightning speed across the length of the state-Patan, Bhalej, Anand, Baruch, Vadodara, Ahmedabad-claiming over 60 lives, 45 in Ahmedabad alone, besides

leaving hundreds injured or homeless and property worth lakhs damaged.

What began as a tiny spark in Patan a month ago ended up consuming Ahmedabad, the biggest city in the state, last fortnight. An innocuous incident sparked off the bloodletting-an indicator of the tensionfraught Hindu-Muslim relations in the city.

On April 3, a Muslim was stabbed to death, giving rise to rumours that Hindus were responsible,

though there was no solid evidence to prove this. The next day, three persons were killed in retaliation. Adding a gruesome touch to the entire episode was the stabbing of 11 Hindus in a public transport bus by a gang of four. Enraged Hindu fundamentalists went on the rampage next day, burning and looting Muslim shops. The Muslims then retaliated in kind.

The authorities on their part repeated the familiar cycle of clamping curfew on the disturbed areas and resorting to police firing—thereby adding to the mounting death toll. But what added to Chimanbhai Patel's embarrassment was the fact that not only had his government been caught completely offguard but also that he was caught trying to fudge the facts. For instance, at least 17 persons were killed on April 6, but the Doordarshan news bulletin that evening placed the toll at one; Patel himself told newsmen that three persons had died.

Said Janata Dal MLA and former police commissioner Jaspal Singh: "It does not behove the leader of a party that





The carnage (above): and the people rendered homeless: the tragic cycle repeats itself

cused the other of having masterminded the communal riots.

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And caught in the crossfire was Chief Minister Chimanbhai Patel, On the one hand, he has to take care not to antagonise the Janata Dal's newly-created constituency of Muslims. On the other hand, he has to

occasionally concede the wishes of the BJP which is part of the coalition government.

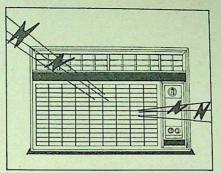
That the BIP is determined to claimits pound of flesh became evident in the course of an ugly episode at the Ahmedabad circuit house, where the state Government has temporarily shifted because of the violence engulfing the town. BJP and VHP workers landed up there to demand the transfer of a Muslim DCP, Fazal Guard, from Ahmedabad as they claimed he was partisan. When the chief minister refused to oblige, they went on a rampage, smashing windows and throwing furniture.

Soon after the riots first broke out, Chimanbhai Patel had said: "We have reluctantly invoked the provisions of the Anti-Terrorist Act. Though we are yet to getevidence, we don't rule out a political design behind the spurt of communal violence." Whether the riots are spontaneous or the result of some devilish machinations, if he fails to stem the communal tide, it will be the chief minister himself who will pay the heaviest —UDAY MAHURKAR price.

believes in free media to suppress information in such a way." Jaspal Singh had, in fact, forewarned the Assembly last month that communal tempers were running high, a warning he repeated on April 3.

Moreover, the minor flare-ups in other parts of the state should have prepared the Government for trouble in Ahmedabad—a communally sensitive city. To make matters worse, when violence first broke out in Ahmedabad, politicians failed to work in tandem with the police. On April 4, for instance, when trouble had just erupted, the police rounded up 40 antisocial elements from the city, but at the behest of Minister of State for Home Narhari Amin, had to release most of them the next day.

The state Government in fact seemed completely clueless about the cause of the riots. There were suggestions that bootleggers-on whom there had recently been a major clampdown by the new regime—may have engineered the violence. Then there were the usual noises from rival political camps. Expectedly, both the Congress(I) and BJP ac-



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UTTAR PRADESH

Lingua Fracas

Anti-English tirade by Yadav



CHIEF Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav has a reputation for shooting from the hip. But his latest, a tirade against the English language, has snowballed into a

major controversy with serious national implications.

Yadav's anti-English offensive was launched in January, and in a dozen public functions and meetings since, he

has carried the attack to absurd lengths. Samples: "English language is the biggest curse on this country and the state. The language breeds corruption. The proof is that boys from a rural background are less corrupt than those who study in English medium public schools"; "The English language is the biggest hurdle in the progress of the Urdu language, Remove English from the scene today, and the Urdu language will automatically prosper."

Then, on March 24, the chief minister declared at a function in Lucknow: "If I could do it, I would burn this language all together." Two days later, Chief Secretary Raj Bhargava issued a government order banning the use of the English language in official work with immediate effect. The order, quoting the Uttar Pradesh State Language Act of 1951, said that

despite Hindi being the official language, official work was being done in English. "Flouting of the orders will be dealt with strictly," it declared.

Yadav made matters worse by asserting that his government was seriously considering closing down the 1,500 English medium public schools and missionary schools in the state to end the dual education standards. The remark provoked a protest letter from the three Bishops of Lucknow—Alan De Lastic of the Roman Catholic Church, Samuel Kariappa of the Methodist Church and M.A.Z. Rolston of the churches of Northern India.

Said Bishop De Lastic: "Before mak-

ing such a serious remark, the chief minister should have told us what wrong we are doing. We also run Hindi medium schools, besides teaching Hindi and Sanskrit in our English medium institutions. What have we done but produce good and cultured citizens."

The Bishops' alarm is well-merited. On January 22, a group of Shiv Sena activists went on the rampage, attacking some of the missionary schools in the city. Furniture was damaged in St. Anna School and classes disrupted in the Children's Akademi and Loreto School. Says Gilbert Lobo, adviser to the Mission Boys and Girls Schools: "They told a principal that they were merely putting

Yadav at Hindi Day function

Meanwhile, the business of implementing the order is not proving to be simple. The Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission has sought the Government's guidelines on the issue of holding examinations in Hindi, specifically regarding technical terms in medicine, science and other allied subjects. The Government—which has so far done nothing to ensure the development of a Hindi vocabulary—is yet to respond to the query. And it is likely that the March 26 government order will go the way of six similar ones by earlier Congress(I) governments since 1977. The last one was issued by the N.D. Tiwari government on September 13, 1989. When the Bir Bahadur Singh government issued a similar order on June 12, 1985, Singh



Yadav's statements against English have created a sense of insecurity among those who teach or learn the language.

into practice what the chief minister wants."

The Anglo-Indian Association of Lucknow has also taken grave objection to Yadav's statement that the English language breeds corruption. The Lucknow unit—which has sent a memorandum against Yadav to Frank Anthony, president of the All-India Anglo-Indian Association—is contemplating filing a case against the chief minister for flouting constitutional provisions which give Anglo-Indians the right to speak English, their mother tongue. Said a spokesman for the association: "We will seek the advice of our all-India representatives and move the courts."

also sanctioned Rs 5 lakh for the creation of a universal Hindi vocabulary for uniformity of terminology used in official correspondence. However, no steps have been taken till date.

What Yadav has achieved is to create a sense of insecurity and ill-will among those who either teach or learn English. As a letter from a student in the columns of a local English daily put it: "The chief minister has stated that if the English language is not banished, a farmer's son cannot become an IAS or PCS. Is it not enough he becomes a chief minister, which post is far greater?" Yadav's reply. in Hindi, is still awaited.

—DILIP AWASTHI

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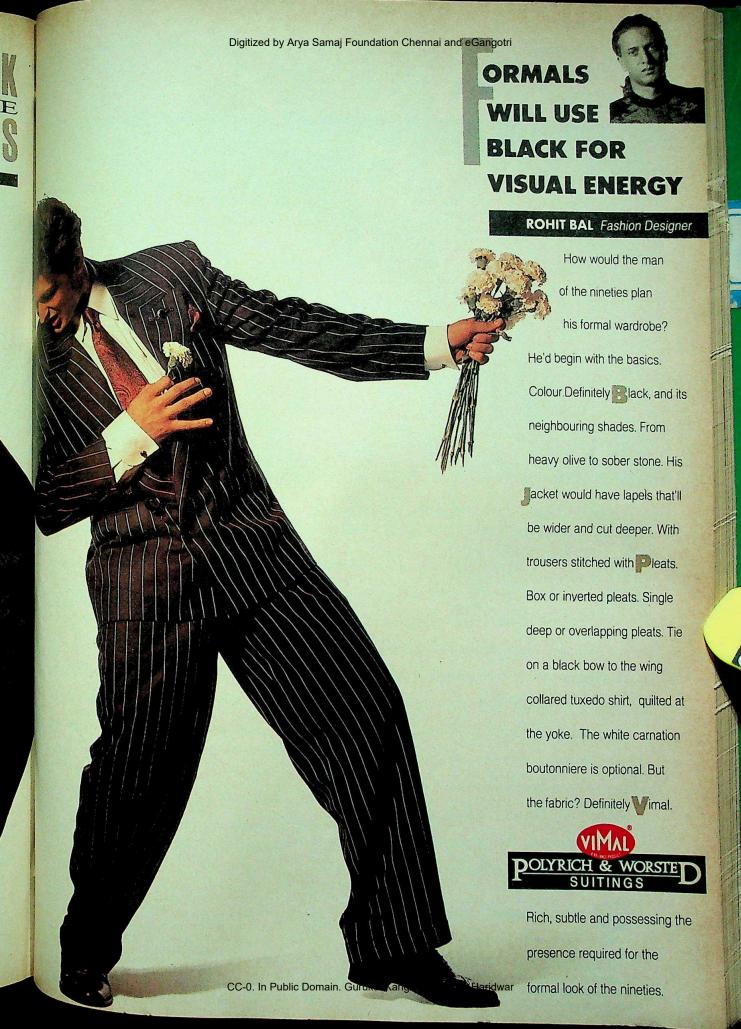
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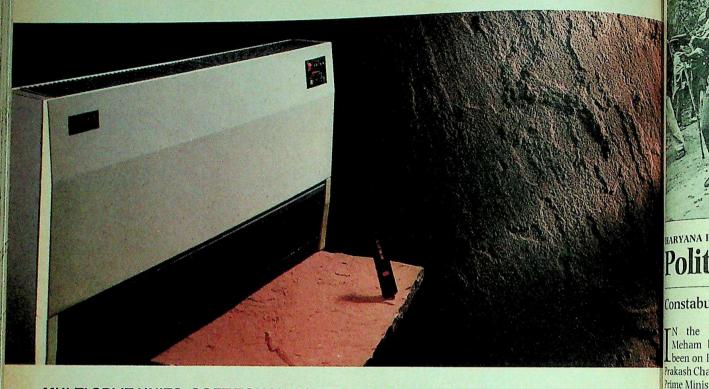
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STATE OF THE ART IN SPLIT



HARYANA POLICE

Political Force

Constabulary is politicised

N the brouhaha following the Meham by-election, the focus has been on Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala and his father Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal. In the event, a most serious upshot of the polling violence has been ignored: the display of insubordination by more than 400 poter recruits, and the lack of punitive setion by the state Government.

The Haryana Government has allowed the recruits to return to the Haryana Armed Police (HAP) complex in Madhuban and continue training. It has so attempted to underplay the issue. Saysstate Home Minister Sampat Singh: There is no revolt. Only 30 or 40 recruits raised slogans on being instigated by one head constable." Singh's sonchalance attempts to conceal a deep-sated malaise: the rampant politicistion of the Haryana Police.

Official sources reveal that the state overnment had gone in for massive eployment of the HAP—7.800 jawans a force of 30.000—in Meham, with a alleged intention of manipulating polling. Overseeing the police depolling. Overseeing the police depolling in police of sampating police chief R.R. Singh; and IG (CID) and Ram among others. When the decion Commission ordered a repoll on the long ary 28, it wanted some HAP personators be pulled out of Meham.

They were sent to the Rohtak police sent, and left to fend for themselves on cold, rainy night, without food. The

Police in Meham: rebellious mood

recruits were in a cantankerous mood when they learnt that their colleague Harbans Singh had been clubbed to death by Anand Singh Dangi's supporters. What infuriated them was the rumour that Harbans Singh had been forced by a senior police officer to swap clothes with Chautala's son, Abhay Singh, and that the mob had killed him taking him to be Abhay Singh. The recruits were instigated by two police 'leaders', Head Constables Dilawar Singh and Mohinder Singh.

R.R. Singh and DIG Y.S. Nakai just managed to dissuade a 400-strong mob of policemen from taking out a procession. Admits R.R. Singh: "The jawans told me they would not obey wrong orders and do the kind of things they were made to do in Meham."

But the Government is reluctant to punish the rebels. Politics, seemingly, is again at the bottom of it. It is well known that most of the 4,700 recruitments in the last year have not been on merit. Says an IG: "Most were either recommended by MLAs or had paid money."

The Rohtak revolt highlights the manner in which the state police is being run. There have been mutinies in Rohtak and Madhuban. The 1989 parliamentary polls saw large scale misuse of the police in Bhiwani and Hisar. Worse, the force has been without a director-general for three months now. The last one, S.S. Brar, before relinquishing charge in December 1989, had warned the chief minister in a letter that unless the force was allowed to work professionally, the chaos of Bhiwani and Hisar would continue to be repeated. But perhaps that's what the powers in Haryana want. -KANWAR SANDHU

BOMBAY

Bomb Spree

Blasts rock city police



THE pattern is ominous. In the span of six months, as many as 16 bombs have either exploded or been defused in the nick of time in Bombay. What is most

alarming is that while the first four were directed at Sikh establishments, the other 12 have been targeted at the police force itself. Mercifully, the blasts have claimed just two lives and the damage to



"The fact that the police are the target is causing concern."

ARVIND INAMDAR
Joint Police Commissioner

property has been minimal. But what is worrying is the sheer impunity with which the bombs continue to be planted, and the fact that all of them happen to be of the same make.

To make matters worse, so far the police seem to have come up with vague theories instead of substantial clues. Among their suspects are: the underworld, fundamentalist organisations, and constables who were dismissed for their role in the police riots of 1982. Police Commissioner Sudhakar Bhave, however, is reluctant to comment on these possibilities. "As of now, I can only

tell you that this is being done by someone who has a grudge against the police," he says.

It was with the fifth in the series of blasts, on November 27 last year, that the police became targets. A powerful device exploded in trade union leader Datta Samant's Kamgar Aghadi office in central Bombay. One constable was killed and two seriously injured. Next, on January 2, at Naigaum, a locality in central Bombay housing a large chunk of the police force, another

bombexploded, killing a constable's son. Subsequently, a bomb went offinside the compound of the Mahim police station; another bomb was found at the Worli Parade Grounds, used regularly by the force for marches and parades; two bombs were found at police posts in Dadar and D.N. Road. Says Joint Police Commissioner (Crime) Arvind Inamdar: "The fact that the police are the target is causing concern.

More recently, on March 23, the

bomb squad detonated a bomb at the office of the deputy commissioner of police, special branch, after an anonymous caller abused the police and then told them where exactly a bomb was planted. Three days later a bomb was found under the driver's seat of a jeep.

Working largely in the dark, and in the absence of any convincing clues, the city police can do little else but take preventive measures and hope they find the next bomb—before it explodes.

-RAGHU NANDAN DHAR

BOTTOMLINE BY D. BUNKER

Art of Consensus

"We don't have a permanent coterie, that's why we have committees." Thus spake Prime Minister V.P. Singh in defence of his style

of consensus politics. The problem is that what seems to be developing is a permanent committee, sitting on everything from 1&K and Punjab to foreign policy. While that may speak volumes for multi-party democracy, it plays havoc with the decision-making process. A typical consensus meeting.

George Fernandes: I don't think this all-party approach to the Kashmir problem is going to work. As minister in charge, I can't have everyone meddling in my affair. I'm like the engine driver on a runaway train.

V.P. Singh: But George, the all-party strategy was a tremendous success.

George: Really? How is that?

V.P.: Well, everybody agreed that Kashmir is a serious national problem. That's consensus, isn't it?

S.S. Mann: What about Punjab? You people had such a difficult time getting such an important bill passed in Parliament. So where is the consensus?

V.P.: Of course, there is total consensus, man. We are all agreed that you can't enter Parliament waving that sword around.

Rajiv Gandhi: Point taken. But we are daggers drawn as far as your government's policy on Namibia is concerned. During my chat there with Nelson, Robert and Sam we were all in consensus about what needs to be done. Even K.K. was saying the same thing.

L.K. Advani: K.K. Tewary?

Rajiv (haughtilu): Kenneth Kaunda.

V.P.: We have no differences on Namibia even though we went our sepa-

rate ways. In my chat with James, Hosni and Douglas, we were also in total agreement with what needs to be done. Even Eduardo felt the same.

Iyoti Basu: Eduardo Faleiro?

V.P. (haughtilu): Shevardnadze.

Subramanian Swamy: All this consensus business is nothing but a con. It makes no census. The BJP wants the VHP to be exempted from taxes and the Left wants Jyoti Basu to come to the Centre. How are you going to resolve these issues?

V.P.: By letting the left hand know what the right is doing. That's the art of consensus politics.

Mahanta: I have a serious problem on my hands. These ULFA people are creating havoc in Assam. We need to find a consensus on how to tackle the problem.

V.P: There already is a consensus on the ULFA problem. Mahanta: Oh! What's that?

V.P.: That it's your problem.

Rajiv: I think this consensus politics is going too far. How can we run the country with so many people trying to take a collective decision? One-man-one-decision. That was my policy. I recommend that we scrap this all-party business.

V.P.: Very well. If you feel so strongly about it, we will have to do something new.

Rajiv: What?

V.P.: Simple. We will appoint an all-party committee. Let them decide.





No more weird Western desserts: Qureshi with his team at the Dum Pukht restaurant

India Without Muttonburgers For the best cuisine in town, eat on the street

ne of the best-loved sweets in India is a gulab jaman—two bites' worth of a tender, milky dough, fried until golden and soaked in a syrup fragrant with rosewater. This morsel can be found in

3 but tastes most delianding in the street, Il, spooning up your leaves stitched for e. How dispiriting, an ambitious New r its concept of Ingulab jaman the d with cognac and

is still a new idea aws and dustoms ecific on the subto eat and what oking and who at don't exactly ing. In the last 's middle cla 0 millio up

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curries and "Kashmiri" rice laced with canned fruit cocktail. Others specialize in such weirdly Western desserts as the "maze gateau," a pudding molded and dyed to resemble an ear of corn.

But there are spectacular exceptions, among them the two restaurants at New Delhi's Maurya Sheraton Hotel. Bukhara, opened in 1977, quickly became the most popular hotel restaurant in town with its extraordinary dishes from India's old northwest frontier. Almost everything at Bukhara is cooked on charcoal or in the clay oven known as a tandoor, including whole cauliflower and a magnificent leg of lamb marinated in rum. (Bukhara now has branches in Chicago and New York.) The Maurya's new Dum Pukht is more formal, introducing to public cuisine the tradition of clay-pot cooking from Lucknow. Heading the kitchen is Mohammed Imtiaz Qureshi, who comes from many generations of Lucknow cooks and butchers. Qureshi can neither read nor write, but the dishes he has been preparing since Dum Pukht opened in 1988 are revelatory. Spicy chicken with tomatoes and peppers baked in "purdah" (that is, hidden under a rich crust), and a rice dish intensely flavorful from long, slow cooking, served with a heady garlic yo-

gurt—this is memorable fare. Both these places specialize in north Modian food, the style most familiar to Westerners, but it's the food of the south that has had the biggest impact on India's public cuisine. In the last 15 years south Indian

big, tr protect anyway is frying e enoing Spicy n street for closet-size Bhandar, heart of th proprietor city's best and rice tw with chutne sational dist the size of a s translucent; a bit of chicks dollop of swee ney, fresh coris crisp, salty spi eat a colgappe though it may be be ome clear: wh sion of flavors at we and all comp speak the local lai Tay Mahal, and y. after the first three Perched on a ledge

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NEWSWEEK DISCOVERED IT— **BUT DIDN'T WE** KNOW IT ALL ALONG!

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Dunz Pukht

New Delhi: Welcomgroup Maurya Sheraton Hotel & Towers. Opening soon at Welcomgroup SeaRock Sheraton, **Bombay**

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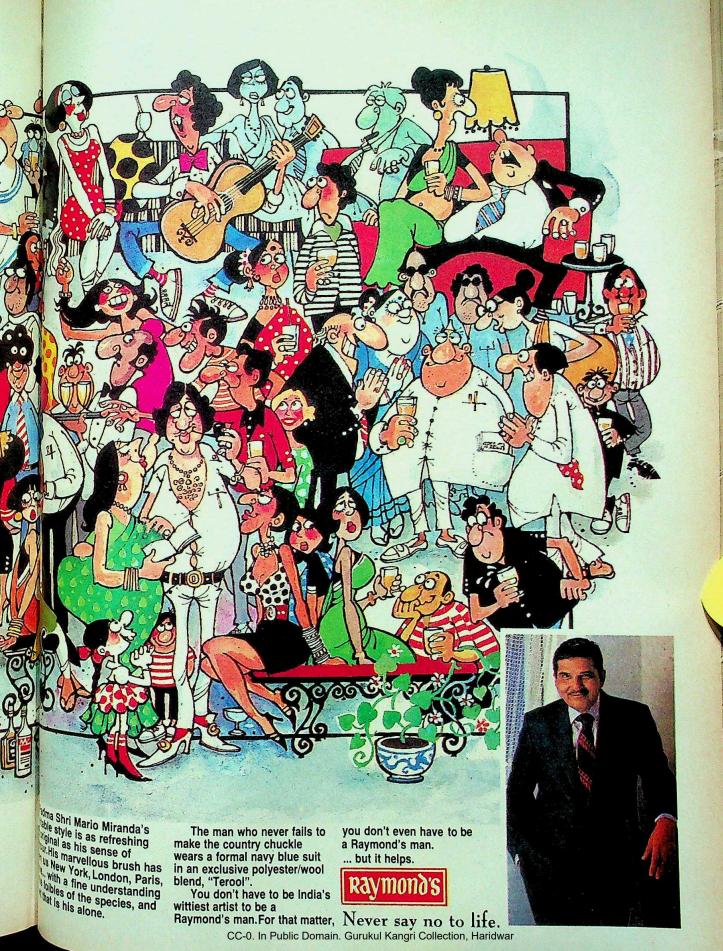
You don't have to be India's wittiest artist to be a Raymond's man.





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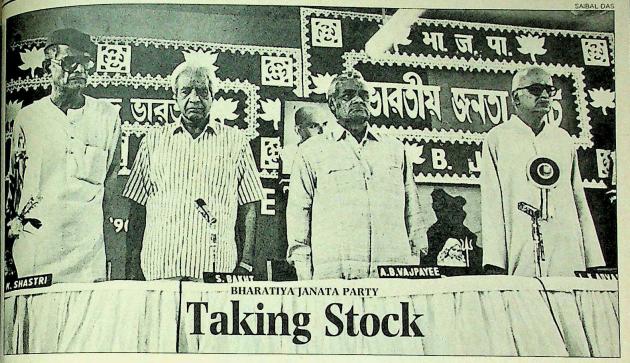
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TACTLY a decade ago, the members of the erstwhile Bharatiya Jana Sangh broke away from the Janata Party on the question of dual membership. Two days later the BJP was born with "complete control over its destiny".

Ten years later the party has come a long way. It has staked its flag in the Hindi heartland and established its clout at the Centre. And last fortnight it made a determined foray farther east when it held its three-day National Executive session in Calcutta. Declared President L.K. Advani: "It is a turning point in the political scenario of West Bengal."

West Bengal and Calcutta have always been landmarks in the rightist party's growth. It was West Bengal which sent Shyama Prasad Mookherjee lo form and head a new political party the Bharatiya Jana Sangh—after the trackdown against the RSS in the wake of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. It was again West Bengal which elected 13 MLAs in the first assembly elections in 1952, when there were only two other Party MLAs nationwide. And again five years ago, in the wake of the BJP's poll debacle in 1984, the national executive had met here and chalked out a strategy for its resurrection.

While the leaders were guarded in attacking the Left Front Government in West Bengal, the deliberations were functuated with anger against the National Front Government, particularly in Kashmir and the budget. The BJP made it clear it would fight for the

abolition of Article 370 which gives special status to Kashmir. The Calcutta session showed a significant shift in the party's platform—from Ayodhya to Kashmir. The intention is obvious: by building up a hysteria over Kashmir it can mix Hindutva with nationalism, thus countering the charge of playing the communal card.

The BJP's stand-offish posture at the conference was an obvious effort to maintain its identity as distinct from that of the National Front. This became clear when the resolution on the post-budget scenario stated that the finance minister has not demonstrated any variance from past practice. Said Vajpayee: "In the budget openness is required. Why this hush-hush business. And then there is no need for a separate railway budget."

The party also blamed "the soft policy of the present government" for the deteriorating situation in Punjab. But Vajpayee said clearly: "We will not cause the fall of this government. If it falls, it will fall because of its own faults, but at the same time the BJP would not allow the Congress(I) to gain from it."

The national executive also drew up a five-year plan and appointed an 11-member study group to oversee its ambitious strategy to conquer West Bengal, the North-east and the south. In West Bengal the party has been gaining ground, and there are reasons for its optimism. Despite strong opposition by the Left Front Government, Ramshila Pujas were held at several places and in the general elections that followed, the

BJP leaders at Calcutta rally: ambitious

party witnessed its votes increasing to 1.71 per cent from 0.40 per cent in 1984. More, the Congress(I) in the state has been virtually paralysed.

The immediate target: making a dent in the assembly elections in 1992. According to state unit Secretary Paras Dutta, of the Congress(I)'s 42 per cent votes only 18 to 20 per cent was committed party votes and out of 35 per cent of the CPI(M)'s votes only 15 per cent was committed votes. So the state executive committee feels there are about 42 to 44 per cent "negative voters" who are eager for a change. And it is this segment the party has set its eyes on.

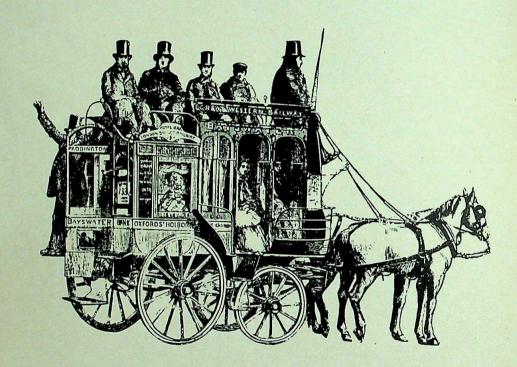
A comprehensive action plan indicates the state unit will go in for massive mass mobilisation in the near future. "Our plan is to enrol at least one member from each family," says Dutta. As for resistance from the CPI(M), he avers: "We'll face them in whatever way."

The CPI(M) leaders laugh at the plans and the party's influential daily Ganashakti described the BJP's exercise as a "hoax" and reminded them that it was not the only party supporting the National Front Government.

Whether the BJP's plans are realistic is debatable, but the Calcutta session was definitely a shot in the arm for it and has helped give a new dimension to the state's politics dominated for years by the bristling confidence of the CPI(M) and the continuing factionalism of the Congress(I).

—FARZAND AHMED

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RAJYA SABHA

Declining Stature

It is no longer the house of the venerable

HE term 'House of Elders' no longer suits the Rajya Sabha. Once occupied by the venerable and the erudite, the benches of the Upper House are today filled by discards from the Lok Sabha elections and minions whom party bosses are compelled to accommodate.

The entry of over 70 new members to the Upper House through the recent biennial elections reveals the continuation of this process of degeneration that was set in motion in 1986 when Rajiv Gandhi sent respective fieldoms. Alwaysthestrongman, Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal got his personal aide K.K. Deepak elected: till the other day, Deepak was an officer on special duty in the Agriculture Ministry. Another Devi Lal nominee, Vidya Beniwal,

vacated her Darba Kalan constituency in Haryana to facilitate the election of Om Prakash Chautala to the state Assembly, on the pretext of entering the Rajya Sabha. Neither of the deputy prime minister's nominees is likely to enhance the quality of debates in the Rajya Sabha.

And the rhetoric of two Janata Dal candidates from Uttar Pradesh—selected by none other than V.P. Singh—is likely to put the party in some hot spots. For both men—Maulana Obeidullah Azmi and Mohammed Afzal—are controversial. The Maulana—who is a prominent member of the Babri Masjid Action Committee—has already embarrassed the Dal leadership with his communal speeches. And Afzal, a journalist with an Urdu newspaper—who has close links with Syed Abdullah Bukhari, the Shahi Imam of Delhi's Jama Masjid—has perfected the art of political survival.

Sources close to the prime minister have an explanation for nominating both men. "Since the Muslims overwhelmingly voted for us in the November elections we had to fulfil their aspirations. Besides, these two nominations were intended to balance our leanings on the BJP," says a Dal leader candidly.

In an obvious attempt to deflect attention from these controversial figures, Janata Dal spokesman Jaipal Reddy tries to

focus attention on his party's more worthy candidates. He points out that the "important selection criterion" for the Rajya Sabha elections was accommodating intellectuals, scientists, veteran parliamentarians and seasoned party workers. Therefore, Reddy argues, the election of personages like M.G.K. Menon, Raja



THE RAJA'S COURTIER

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THE bespectacled Som Pal looks more like a company executive than a roughhewn politician. Though his election to the Upper House is ascribed to his proximity to V.P. Singh. Pal claims to have his "own independent views and following", During the 1985 assembly elections in

Uttar Pradesh, he contested on a Congress(I) ticket from Chhaproli but lost narrowly to Charan Singh's daughter. The organiser of many of V.P. Singh's rallies since 1987, Pal is a rare Brahmin in the Jat-dominated Janata Dal.

Ramanna and Rajmohan Gandhi reveals the Janata Dal's commitment to maintaining high standards in the Upper House. Reddy also takes pains to defend the nomination of Som Pal, who has a limited mass base of his own but has made it to the Rajya Sabha by virtue of the fact that he happens to be one of V.P. Singh's foremost lieutenants.

In sharp contrast to the nominees of the centrist parties, the cadre-based BJP and CPI(M) displayed a clear-cut vision in



THE GANDHI LOYALIST

R.K. Dhawan has no mass base of his own. But he derives immense clout from being the classic power broker, the political fixer for the Gandhis, first Indira and now Rajiv. And last fortnight he earned respectability when Rajiv rewarded him by sending him to the Upper House.

Dhawan makes it clear that he sees no role for himself other than assisting Rajiv. "I have been serving the Gandhi family for the past so many years. I perform whatever role the party leadership assigns me," he says.

a host of nonentities to the Rajya Sabha. Even this time round, Rajiv has continued the trend by choosing R.K. Dhawan—whose sole qualification is that he has faithfully served the Gandhi family—as the Congress(I) candidate from Andhra Pradesh. Many consider Dhawan's nomination as just one more instance of Rajiv's utter disregard for the standards of the Upper House. Dhawan certainly stakes no claim to political stature. On his becoming a Rajya Sabha member, he candidly admitted: "I perform whatever role the leader assigns me."

Not that the Janata Dal nominated many wise old men to the Upper House. In that party it appeared that the state subedars were collecting tolls from their

THE SENA'S TIGRESS he Shiv Sena's so

The Shiv Sena's sole member in the Upper Chandrika House, Kenia, is the glamour girl of Maharashtra Dropped politics. from the state Cabinet by Sharad Pawar, she languished in the political wilderness for some time, before landing up at Shiv Sena supremo Bal door-Thackeray's

step. Now the lady declares: "The Congress(I) is more communal than the Sena." When asked how she plans to function in the Upper House, Kenia, a former cricketer, says: "I was fond of bowling out opponent batswomen."

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of choice of nominees. In an obvious of to play down its image as a Hindu ty, the BJP sent party Vice-President ander Bakht, a Muslim, to the Upper The articulate Bakht is likely to uribute considerably to debates on ges like communalism in the House. dioattract the old socialists who might re been disillusioned with the Janata the BJP nominated Shiprasad hinpuria, a prominent former socialist Madhya Pradesh. But the party was andly censured for selecting the controsial Dr J.K. Jain as many insiders spect his loyalty to the BJP.

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The CPI(M)'s nomination of the Hindiaking Sarla Maheshwari revealed the ty's desire to extend its appeal beyond st Bengal and Kerala. Partymen add Maheshwari's nomination also aims



THE VIDEO DOCTOR

Dr J.K. Jain's claim to fame is ownership of one of Delhi's swankest video studios, a nursing home, and Surya magazine. And, of course, he dabbles in politics. As many in the BJP suspect his loyalty, his efforts to ^{sland} from a Delhi Lok Sabha seat had been blocked. This time, he was backed by Rajmata Vijayraje Scindia. Many consider this the beginning of power-brokerism in the BJP.

winning over the alienated non-Benpopulation in West Bengal—the sole the where the Marxists are invincible. The most colourful nominee was the Sena's: the party sent the youthful odrika Kenia to the Upper House. promises "very active participation nmy side" and says: "I'll be the Sena's tess in the Rajya Sabha.'

that should invite a roar from the ches, even if it doesn't inspire intellidebate. -BHASKAR ROY ARUN SINGH

Theft Mystery

THE mud-and-wood cottage perched high on a hill in Binsar in remote Almora is hardly a tempting target for burglars. To get to the cottage—which has neither tap water nor electricity-entails a steep, fourkilometre climb, through thick bushes

and boulders. The area is sparsely populated except for bears and panthers.

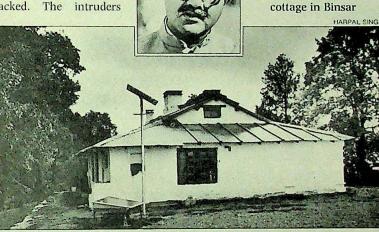
Yet, on January 14 night, the cottage was broken into and ransacked. The intruders environmental activist Mukti Duttalive in a neighbouring cottage.

Policemen from Someshwar and Almora inspected Singh's cottage. They took pictures, lifted fingerprints and interrogated everyone present including Mukti, her assistant Shankar, the servants, as well as Singh and Romola when they returned.

The investigation by the police has been systematic and intensive, though the accused still remain unnamed.

> Says Almora's Deputy Superintendent of Police Ashok Raghav: "We can't take any action till the

Arun Singh; and his cottage in Binsar



searched the cupboards, opened a briefcase leaving papers strewn all over, emptied food stocks on the kitchen floor and poured kerosene and mustard oil on them. They took a few household goods, leaving valuable items-including two licensed weapons and jewellery-untouched.

What added to the intrigue was the occupant of the cottage—Arun Singh, former minister of state for defence who resigned over the controversial Bofors issue. Singh and his companion, Romola, were in Delhi when the burglary took place. Though an FIR was filed at the Someshwar police station the next evening, the police still have no clue as to who was responsible. That Singh was suspected to possess confidential papers immediately raised suspicion of the involvement of intelligence sleuths.

Singh's cottage-acquired on a 90-year lease—is situated in the Dutta estate and belongs to Vivek Dutta who owns apple orchards in the area. The Dutta family-Vivek, his Belgian wife Maria Theresa Dutta, and daughter, fingerprints examination reports establish the identity of the culprits.

The first report of the fingerprints examination came from Bareilly after four weeks but it failed to identify anyone. The police then sent fresh fingerprints, this time to Allahabad. That report is yet to be received.

Vivek Dutta feels the burglary was the work of intelligence sleuths. In fact, D.P. Tripathi of the state intelligence, who was posted to Almora 10 months ago to keep a watch on Arun Singh, approached Singh before the general elections to ask if he was writing something for publication.

The other possibility is that the house could have been broken into to get Arun Singh to leave. Says Raghav: "We cannot rule out the possibility of a forcible eviction."

The Duttas vehemently deny that they are trying to get Singh to vacate the cottage. Says Mukti: "Why should I? I insisted that he be brought in." So, till the fingerprints report arrives, the burglary will remain a mystery.

-HARPAL SINGH in Almora and Binsar

Infinite Participation of the Refrigerants

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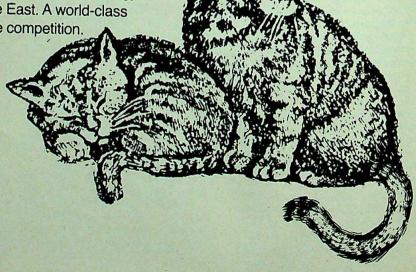
Right now there are a lot of 'meows' being heard in the market place. But here are the facts about *Mafron*;

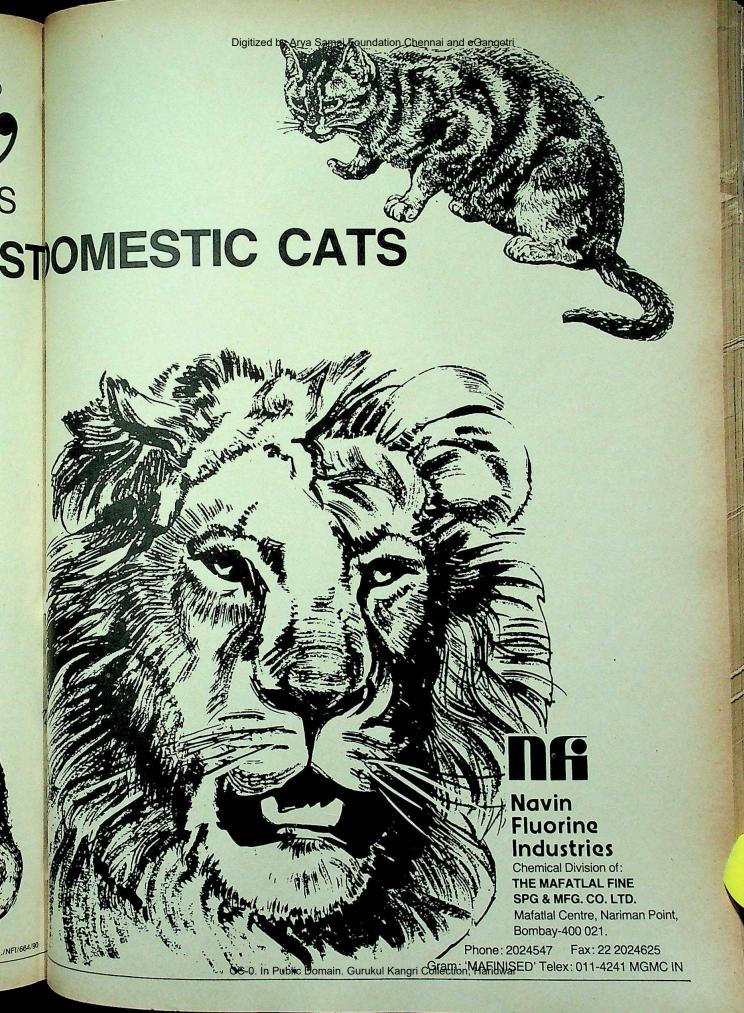
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ANDHRA PRADESH

Bloody Round

Political violence on the rise



BRAZEN lawlessness. Gruesome attacks. Bloody murders. In recent weeks, Andhra Pradesh has been rocked by political violence. The victims belong to both the

Telugu Desam and the Congress(I). And as charges and counter-charges fly back and forth, the people of the state seem to have resigned themselves to the violence.

Alarmingly, there's been nothing furtive about the killings. On March 25, Banka Venkateswarlu, vice-president of the Vijayawada Congress(I) Committee, was axed to death by five men. The assailants attacked Venkateswarlu while he was drinking tea at a wayside shop—all in broad daylight.

Venkateswarlu happened to be a lieutenant of Vangaveeti Mohana Ranga Rao, the Congress(I) MLA whose murder by Telugu Desam activists in December 1988 set off a wave of violence in the state's coastal districts. "This is the fourth murder in the city in the four months after the elections," says Ratna Kumari, Ranga's widow recently elected to the Assembly. "The police cannot maintain law and order. There is a conspiracy to get rid of my supporters."

Around the same time, Congress(I) activists led by the brother of state Cooperation Minister J.C. Diwakar Reddy attacked the house of P. Nagi Reddy, a Telugu Desam member at



Rama Rao (left); Reddy: trading charges

Tadipatri in Anantapur district. They also assaulted his supporters.

Telugu Desam leaders have, predictably, condemned the attacks on their own activists. Said party chief N.T. Rama Rao: "The Congress(I) is pursuing the politics of murder." Going a step further, they have accused the Congress(I) of murdering its own partymen. Declared Telugu Desam Secretary G. Muddukrishnama Naidu: "Even the Congress(I) supporters who were killed were victims of the party's own machinations." Surprisingly, that charge is repeated by a few Congress(I) leaders.

Top Congress(I) leaders, however, laugh away the Telugu Desam allegations. Says Revenue Minister D.K. Samarasimha Reddy: "Their only strategy



seems to be to raise one bogey or another for political survival." But privately many Congressmen are worried about the growing violence and Chief Minister Chenna Reddy's inability to curb it. When party President Rajiv Gandhi passed through Hyderabad last fortnight, a Congress(I) MP, Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy, complained to him of rising lawlessness in the state.

Matters could grow worse after the April 10 bandh in the Telengana region in support of farmers' demands called by the People's War Group, the state's principal Naxalite faction.

Chenna Reddy has said his government won't be "a silent spectator". His four-month honeymoon with the Naxalites seems to be over. For the state, that could mean another round of violence.

-AMARNATH K. MENON

TIRUMALA TEMPLE

Gold Grab

HE Tirumala-Tirupathi Devasthanams (TTD), managers of the richest Hindu shrine in the country, the Tirumala Temple, have been besieged by a curious problem: theft of gold offerings.

The gold, dropped in the hundi by devotees, was being stolen at the time of counting by some unscrupulous employees. Later, it was smuggled out of the temple in the bags full of coins that were transported downhill to the temple treasury.

The discovery of gold in some bags of coins last month sparked off trouble

for the state Government in the state Assembly. Endowments Minister Ravindranath Choudhary had to bow to the demand for a committee of MLAs to investigate the collection and counting system and prevent further thefts. But even before the MLAs' team was named, a special police investigation team led by M. Ratan, superintendent, crime branch, had begun to uncover what seems to be a major hundi scandal.

Following investigations, the police last fortnight arrested 12 TTD employees, including three assistant executive officers. Cash and documents regarding property worth several lakhs of rupees were seized after raids on their residences. Among those held was a gold appraiser, earning a salary

of Rs 700 a month, who was found to own four buildings costing about Rs 5 lakh each, a large plot, a goldsmith's shop, a silversmith's shop and a pawn broker's shop under different names.

"They ran a well organised racket," says Ratan, who has to suggest ways to plug the thefts from the elaborate hundi collection and counting system. Meanwhile, the TTD has asked all employees to file declarations of their assets; and has made it mandatory for them to get the permission of the executive officer if they want to buy, sell or gift any immovable property costing more than Rs 5,000. Clearly, the idea is to make it difficult for the unprincipled to cheat the lord of the devotees' offerings.

-AMARNATH K. MENON

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STYLE OF THE 90'S



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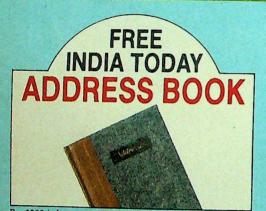


Ravi Shankar; His music, his life



Dev Anand: Romancing fit at 65

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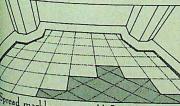


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Islam ki buniyad pe yeh mulk bana hai, ayega is mulk mein Islam ka dastoor, is mulk mein toofan ayega (The hurricane of Islam will blow through this land).

-Refrain from an underground cassette

KASHMIR is at war with India.

It is a declared war with open moral, financial, and logistical support from Pakistan.

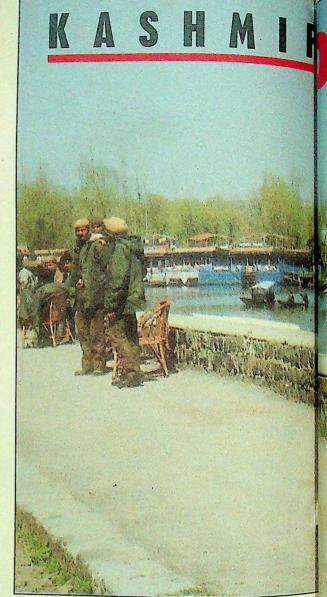
Its first phase is over. And the brutal reality to which the country must awake is that the initial round has already been won by the militants. The enormity of the situation-with the latent challenges it poses for the continued existence of the rest of India as a secular state—does not seem to have dawned fully on New Delhi or even on the rest of the nation. And notwithstanding the predictable knee-jerk cries of repression and "reign of terror" against the state administration by liberal groups like the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), the stark truth is that the Indian state is barely fighting back.

The reins of the reign of terror are squarely in the hands of the separatists. Through kidnappings, bombings, assassinations, religious blandishments and press censorship—aided not least of all by the virtual abdication of governance by the Farooq Abdullah government during the last two years—the secessionists have virtually achieved the administrative and psychological severance of the valley from India. And their tentacles are now spreading into Doda, Kistwar, Rajauri and Poonch.

In a cartographic and military sense, Kashmir remains with India. There's Ladakh in the north. Jammu in the south. And the Indian Army all along the actual line of control. But within this circumference now lies an island, a virulently non-Indian entity called Kashmir easily vulnerable to Pakistani manipulation. In Kashmir nobody, either out of fear or out of the total alienation that pervades the region, now talks for India or even a settlement with the Centre. That part is over. Done with. The movement has now arrived at a different crossroads. The debate is now whether they choose independence or Pakistan.

The 'Indian dogs', as it were, have mostly gone home. From Srinagar, Baramula, Tral. Pulwama, Anantnag, Kupwara, Handwara, Bandipore. Businessmen, bankers, retired servicemen, hoteliers, tour operators. And Kashmiri pundits. Those who remain are men in uniform, or the Indian officials sitting as soft targets for terrorist hit lists in Srinagar's Raj Bhawan, or the mini winter secretariat. Lonely outposts of the Indian Union.

In what is surely one of the greatest refugee migrations in recent Indian history, some 90,000 Kashmiri pundits and other members of the minority community of a total of about 1.40,000(4 per cent of the population) living in the valley have fled their homes leaving property worth crores behind. Rows of large houses in Munshibagh and Rawalpura are deserted. And now, the 30,000-odd Sikh shopkeepers and farmers of Tral. Sopore and Baramula have begun to cry for protection if they, too, are



Securitymen keep vigil on the empty boulevard alon

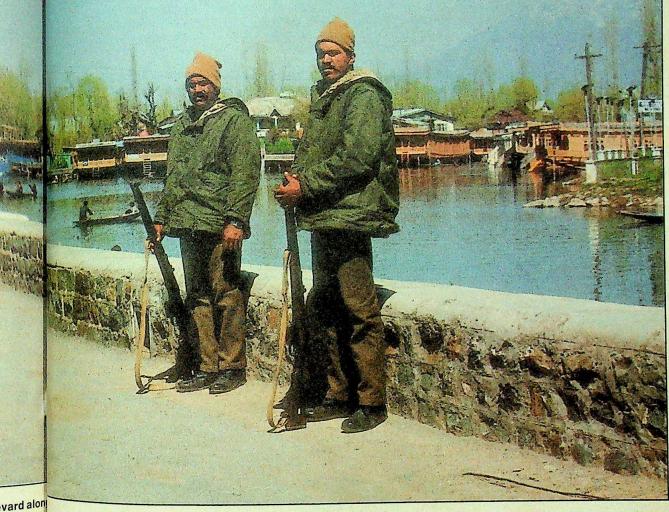


Scenes from a widely-circulated propaganda

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FEBILOUS TURN



gar's Dal Lake, that was once the hub of the valley's throbbing tourist activity and traffic





^eocassette showing a policeman greeting demonstrators; JKLF insignia; and secessionists in Srinagar

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not to migrate. Some have already started moving out.

The few local papers that circulate under terrorist benevolence regularly attribute the migration to exaggerated Indian propaganda. The educated elite-yesterday's moderates, today's separatists-tell the eager ideologues of the PUCL just what they want to hear: that their movement is secular and the fleeing Hindus are just puppets of BJP propaganda. But to a family taking flight from its roots, property, value system and the familiarity of everyday existence, this is just so much nonsense.

Ask Mrs Dar, a doctor whose family has lived in downtown Srinagar for generations. She fled under fundamentalist threats a month ago to Jammu with her family. She and her sisters returned last fortnight—the men were too scared to accompany them-disguised under burkhas and fell at the feet of a government official begging help to recover their belongings from the house they hurriedly padlocked before fleeing.

Or a retired subedar major whose tenant, K. Kaul, is mercilessly gunned down on April 5 in Karan Nagar. The subedar receives a death threat shortly afterwards while he is at work. He does not even go back to his house. His daughters rent a truck within a few hours and load it with their belongings. They pick him up at an appointed place and drive straight to a refugee camp in Jammu.

That same day Subedar Bhushan Lal bursts into the room of a commanding officer inside the cantonment in Srinagar, breaks down and cries like a baby. He was on leave to see his family in Bij

Behara, a 45-minute drive from Srinagar, but has been hounded Behara, a 45-initiate driving militants. He, too, begs for protection for out by gangs of roving militants. He, too, begs for protection for out by gangs of toving his mother and two daughters whom he left behind in Bij Behara when he fled in the early hours of the morning. All he wants is when he fled in the early he had been the wants is that they be safely escorted out. They will never go back, it doesn't matter that he is leaving behind his life savings—a small post office orchard and a house he had managed to build.

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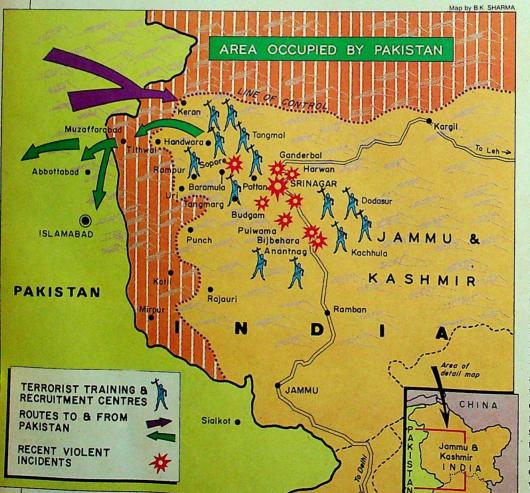
For the

THEY are not fleeing for nothing. Kashmir has seen upheavals in 1953 and in 1964. There was no mass migration. This was largely because the separatist forces had identifiable leaders who espoused secularism and there were few, if any, terrorist assassinations of innocents. But today, the movement is dominated by the money provided by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and the muscle power of the pro-Pakistan. fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami and its Hizbul Mujaheddin and Allah Tiger terror groups. The Jamaat is supposed to be strong in Baramula and Sopore and the "secular" Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front in Srinagar and Anantnag. But this is now merely semantics.

For what once used to be a mass movement for the preservation of ethnic identity, of Kashmiriyat, of which Article 370 was supposed to be the symbolic guardian, has been consumed by a fundamentalist fury that gives the movement sustenance and spiritual guidance. The liberal spirit of sufism that had so infused the valley has now been exorcised.

The movement is now largely conducted from the mosques from where thousands of loudspeakers preach jehad in a terrifying cacophony. And the fundamentalist cultural aggression has spread into everyday life. People must sport beards and wearthe traditional Kashmiri garb. Wristwatches, as in Pakistan, must be worn on the right hand and the time set back a half-hour to correspond with that of Pakistan. Cinema halls, beauty and video parlours, symbols of Indian "decadence" have remained closed for six months. Friday, not Sunday, is now observed as the day of rest. Indian newspapers are not circulated any more. In Kupwara, street dogs were affixed with discs around their necks with the inscription, "Indian dogs," and in Khak, nearby, effigies of Indian soldiers are hung from trees. In nearby Sopore, militants impose their own road tax on civilian vehicles.

Almost everywhere in the valley, Indian institutions have been rendered



Districts of south Kashmir have been the main centres of secessionist activity

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andant. In Srinagar, the Bank of Baroda has closed down, ov of its officers have fled. The Canara Bank has virtually no to handle payments. And the militants have even knocked in the signboard of the State Bank of India near Srinagar's wara Chowk. The banking system is virtually shut down. At post offices tens of thousands of letters are piled up with no to deliver them. Lawyers have boycotted the courts. And sim government servants now in the winter capital of muhave threatened to strike unless moved back to Srinagar. nersely, minority community officials are balking at having to Srinagar when the capital shifts there in summer.

Agriculture continues, with paddy cultivation in full swing, gade and commerce are at a standstill. The transport, tansport, machine tool and lumber industries have ceased to ation. The hotels lie empty. The once proud Oberoi Palace has thalf its executive staff. And Mercury Travels Manager, Raj asthi, for the first time closed shop and left Srinagar, bags, gage and all signalling the end of the tourist season even breit started. The house boats and shikaras bob aimlessly on waters of the Dal and Nagin lakes like so much driftwood. life is one curfew after another with periods of relaxation. enit is relaxed people mill furtively in the streets for a little bit hopping. Cigarettes are scarce, meat rarely available, fresh etables a treat if one can find them. Even though the people re begun to feel the pinch, there's still enough to eat. Every tember, the Kashmiri begins stocking up on rice and dried

tomatoes and other provisions. These will last until May when there are fresh earnings through tourism, carpet weaving and casual labour. But even though this prospect looks bleak the people take heart from regularly beamed Pakistani propaganda that Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who was recently shown supporting a thousand-year struggle to "liberate" Kashmir, will raise crores of rupees in relief money. During curfew relaxation. life appears superficially normal. But life is not normal even in the sanctuary of the army cantonment. Army schools have been closed down and parents given transfer certificates for their children. And the corps commander has declared downtown areas out of bounds for army personnel and their families.

T is during curfew relaxation that the gunmen strike. The strategy is simple. Fire, or hurl bombs at security personnel, assassinate a soft target and duck. Force the security forces to return the fire in which innocent civilians are often killed. fuelling further anti-Indian sentiments.

According to government estimates, anywhere between 2,000 and 5,000 automatic weapons, mostly Chinese-made AK-47s, have been smuggled into the valley. The number of trained insurgents is about 600. But with a network of sympathisers now spreading into virtually every village in the valley with sophisticated information cells, they spell a formidable problem for the roughly 20,000 men of the paramilitary and police forces deployed mostly in large towns.

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Among the biggest challenges for the security forces is that the activists, both armed and unarmed, include PWD workers, irrigation engineers, schoolteachers, storeowners, doctors, lawyers, former MLAs and, most important, members of the Jammu & Kashmir Police who have been active in recruiting terrorists, arranging border crossings, and even driving their vehicles.

Separatist targets are not just anybody found sympathetic to India but, increasingly, Indian Army installations. The subversive arsenal now includes antitank mines, rocket launchers and remote detonation devices. In several places army communication channels have been sabotaged. Civilian personnel working at army installations in Kupwara have received death threats.

How did the situation take such a precipitous turn for the worse? The answer is, it was not sudden. As the official record has shown, Governor Jagmohan was near prophetic in his warnings to Rajiv Gandhi during 1988-89 that the Farooq Abdullah government had collapsed even while it was in power and that separatist militancy, no matter what its immediate roots, was exploding. The warnings were ignored.

It is possible to pinpoint some events that helped fuel the insurgency. First, at a time when militancy was peaking, Faroog's government released 70 of the most experienced, Pakistani-trained terrorists whose detention had been confirmed by the Advisory Board headed by the chief justice of the state high court (see box). Even though they were on

NUMBER AND NATURE OF CASUALTIES

Category-I	
Innocent persons including securitymen killed by terrorists.	54
Category-II	
Persons/militants killed on account of action by police and para-militan	/

ersons/militants killed on account of action by police and page forces in self-defence, in enforcing public order and in cross firing.

Subversionists/militants killed by army guards when they attacked

army convoys or school buses carrying children of army personnel.

23 Secessionists killed during border crossings. rersons killed by security forces in protecting the United Nations official jeep.



For the first time, 'wanted' lists are being circulated



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Of the nearly 90,000 refugees who have fled the Kashmir valley, many have come to Delhi

parole, they are now untraceable.

The separatists saw this as an important victory. Their morale got a major boost when the V.P. Singh Government agreed to free 5 hardcore detenus in exchange for the release of Dr Rubaiya Sayeed. The files show that the decision to release the terrorists was taken by the Farooq government not after negotiations with the terrorists but on the very day of her kidnapping.

Softliners in the Government had hoped that this would bring some of the extremists to the bargaining table. But the action achieved just the opposite. It swung the power pendulum away from the Government and squarely into the separatist camp. So far as the separatists were concerned they had won the first

phase of their battle against India. There was nothing to negotiate. And they escalated their terror.

The crisis flared out of hand with the appointment of lagmohan, not because the governor was unwilling to act, but because New Delhi seemed to have no clear direction in its Kashmir policy and tied the new administration's hands following the January 21 clashes in which securitymen killed Volent pro-Pakistani demonstrators. The Government has appeared to falter, and that has given heart to the terrorists.

From the secessionists' viewpoint, the insurgency has the Indian Government exactly where it wants it divided in Fernandes also met controversial government officials—like

LIST OF PANDITS KILLED

P.N. Bhat	27.12.89
M.L. Bhan	15.1.90
S.K. Tickoo	2.2.90
T.V. Razdan	12.2.90
Lassa Kaul	13.2.90
N. Sapru	27.2.90
P.N. Handoo	1.3.90
B.K. Ganjoo	19.3.90
A.K. Raina	20.3.90
K.K. Kaul	5.4.90
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dealing with the problem. There are now three centres of power dealing with Kashmir: Home Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, a man with very little credibility in his home state, who veers between a hardline law-and-order approach and reviving the Assembly as a stopgap measure; Kashmir Affairs Minister George Fernandes-a novice as far as the intricacies of Kashmir politics are concerned-who believes that the Centre should deal with the militants as well as with some National Conference leaders; and Governor Jagmohan who is asking for a free hand to restore the state's administrative apparatus. The Mufti and Fernandes do not get along, and Fernandes goes about openly snubbing Jagmohan.

When he visits the valley, ostensibly to contact the underground, Raj Bhawan is informed neither of his movements nor of whom he talks to. And some of his actions have effectively served to reverse the tough decisions taken by the Jagmohan administration. For example, on April 2, after the state administration opposed a mass rally for the burial of Ashfaq Majid, a slain terrorist, Fernandes negotiated with a team of self-proclaimed representatives of the extremists and allowed a procession that swelled into a crowd of three lakh at which several of the most wanted militants were given a pulpit.

tants Instit



"Sharmila keeps saying we should spend more time together. So for her birthday, I arranged this quiet dinner. Just the two of us. The warm glow of candlelight. With me in an elegant dinner jacket from Gwalior. She didn't need to thank me. The look in her eyes said far more."

- M.A.K. PATAUDI

OVER

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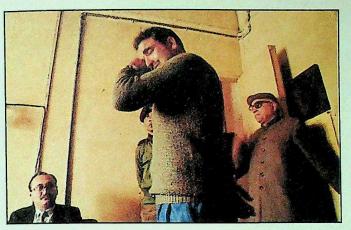
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the jail superintendent sacked by the governor.

The Centre sees this as a carrot-and-stick policy of keeping all channels open. But it is creating an impossible situation for the state administrators who believe that when lobbyists can bypass the system and seek audiences with Fernandes or appeal to the Mufti who has his own political interests in the state, it will be hard to crack down on officials corrupt collaborators.

Even finding a quick

political fix in today's situation is a pipe dream. The National Conserence, whose members have defected in droves is a spent force. Its MPs dare not enter the valley without massive security escort. And the grave of its founding father, Sheikh Abdullah, is guarded round the clock by two security compa-



Subedar Bhushan Lal abandons his home in Kashmir

nies because the militants have threatened to defile it. Even Maulvi Farooq lives in a fortress which he insists should be guarded by not state police but Central security forces.

Militants openly issue calls to boycott Fernandes when he comes to the vallev. And those with whom he has attempted contact-lawyer Mian Qayyoom, Imam Gul Baxi of Batamaloo, G.N. Hagroo, a civil rights activist, and iournalist Sanaullah Butt-are hardly pro-Indian. Oayyoom

Kashmir cannot be held captive to the Simla agreement; his demand is nothing short of independence. And it is unclear whom these people represent.

The bottom line of the militants is secession. And the bottom line of the Indian Government cannot go outside the

TERRORISTS RELEASED BY FAROOQ ABDULLAH GOVERNMENT

BETWEEN July and December 1989, 70 hardcore terrorists were released by the Farooq Abdullah government. Below is a partial list. All detentions had been confirmed by the Advisory Body headed by the chief justice of the Jammu & Kashmir High Court.

MOHAMMED AFZAL SHEIKH of Trehgam

Crossed over to Pakistani territory. Stayed in the home of his brother-in-law, Mohammed Wani, in POK at Athmuqam. Went to Peshawar for training. Met Javed Maqbool Butt and Showkat Maqbool Butt, sons of the hanged JKLF leader Magbool Butt, with the help of JKLF Chairman Amanullah Khan, in Muzaffarabad. Took oath of allegiance to POK, with a thumb impression using his blood. Was responsible for bomb blast damaging two buses.

RAFIQ AHMED AHANGAR

Wentto Pakistan on August 22, 1988 via Leepa. Trained in handling explosives. Involved in several bombings.

MOHAMMAD AYUB NAJAR

Arrested following crossfiring incident near Jamia Masjid on August 25, 1989. Was detained under Public Safety Act. On December 8, 1989, the day of the kidnapping of Dr Rubaiya Sayeed, it was decided in the office chamber of agriculture minister, Mohammed Shafi, that he would be released with 45 others.

FAROOQ AHMED GANAI

Went to Pakistan under the code name of Khalid. Took courses in creating internal disturbances. Mission was to target army, police, the CRPF and BSF, and assassinate dignitaries. Met Amanullah Khan in the house of Raja Muzaffar Khan at Muzaffarabad. Involved in bombings, arson and looting.

GHULAM MOHAMMED GUJRI

Entered Pakistan in August 1988 via Bungna Bala, Kupwara district, for sophisticated arms training. Crossed with help of two POK guides, stayed for the night in the house of one Ghulam Mohammed Wani, originally a resident of Kupwara but settled in Pakistan at Athmugam (POK). This house was being used as a transit camp for the trainees. He was issued one Kalashnikov gun, two magazines, 200 rounds of ammunition, and detonators. Arrested following involvement in a bombing.

FAROOQ AHMED MALIK

Entered Pakistan with the help of Abdul Ahad Waza via Rashanpur for arms and explosives training. Met Amanullah Khan. Arrested after bomb blast in Telegraph Office, Srinagar.

NAZIR AHMED SHEIKH

Entered Pakistan for arms training. Was taken to the house of Raja Muzaffar Khan. Met Amanullah Khan. On return, was arrested for role in Anantnag bomLing.

GHULAM MOHI-UD-DIN TELI

Hardcore Jamaat-e-Islami. Key co-conspirator in an espionage ring. Under his guidance, two Handwara residents went to Pakistan to be trained to spy on Indian Army. Information passed to Pakistani intelligence.

RIYAZ AHMED LONE

Trained in Pakistan. Involved in several bombings.

FAROOQ AHMED THAKUR

Arrested following a shootout with security forces near Jamia Masjid on August 25, 1989. Considerable amount of arms and ammunition recovered from him.

COVER STORY

Constitution. The two positions are irreconcilable. The time for theorising, post-mortems and historical regurgitations is over. New Delhi's writ in the valley runs from Raj Bhawan through Gupkar Road to the nearby winter secretariat. Two hundred yards on each side is terrorist territory. Consider, for example, just one fact. When the administration wanted to relax cursew from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. the militants imposed their own curfew. Not a soul came out into the streets.

The bulk of the people follow whatever institution wields the big stick. Today, that stick is in the hands of the militants. The primary task before the Government is to re-establish its writ and show that it has the political will to do so. To demonstrate that the country will not compromise an inch of its territory. It was the absence of this message during the Faroog regime, and a lack of clarity of purpose under

V.P. Singh's Government that has hobbled the state administration and given a certain strategic advantage to the secessionists.

Confusion and delay in regaining India's lost administrative turf in Kashmir will simply give Pakistan and the militants the most precious resource they can ask for-time. Their strategy is to wear New Delhi down to such an extent that the cost of maintaining Kashmir will become an impossible burden; or to keep a ready-made Pakistan inside India to be used by Pakistan to create constant problems.

The view from New Delhi is that in the long run, time is on its own side because in the peaks and valleys that characterise terrorism all over the world, the fundamentalists, when they realise that they can't really break loose of India's grip, when they begin suffering economically, will wear down and seek a solution with the Centre. But this is precisely the kind of thinking that led to escalating violence in Punjab.

In Kashmir the waitand-wear-down attitude, considering how perilous the situation already is because of years of fence-sitting, is bound to make the problem even more intractable. The longer, for example, that security forces wait for orders to hit known training centres inside the valley's villages—so far more or less out of bounds-the more powerful will terrorist cadres become. They will have more time to import more deadly weapons (they now have Stinger missiles as well), increase their finances, recruit cadres, mobilise international opinion,

and increase their base and morale. The longer the wait, the greater the forces and firepower of

the secessionists, the more deadly and bloody any future confrontation. This would not only cause unpredictable international repercussions but also dangerously affect the mood of India's 98 million Muslims—as Operation Bluestardid in the case of Sikhs in India—who so far have remained unsympathetic to the fundamentalist cause in Kashmir

IGHT now, much can be achieved through low-level. sustained pressure. Last week, the governor began by sacking 75 government servants involved in subversive activities, mounting weapons searches, raids on training camps, indefinite curfews, and arresting over 200 people trying to cross the border. He also refused to compromise with the kidnappers of the vice-chancellor of Kashmir University.

For the time being, it seems, New Delhi is backing stern

measures to stop the drift. But the task ahead is Herculean. Lost ground will have to be recovered inch by inch even in the face of hostile international opinion, and pressure from internal political lobbies. Government offices, banks, transport, hotels, post offices will have to be opened, forcibly if necessary even if it means handing them to security forces or government officials from outside as in Assam in 1983.

And New Delhi must also realise that indirectly its coffers are funding the separatist movement, through the subsidised petrol and the telephone networks with which the subversives communicate. The question to be asked is whether the state should continue to provide those who have declared war against it the wherewithal for mobility and communications. Should it continue to keep on its payroll government servants who refuse allegiance to the Constitution? Should it continue to supply electricity to mosques that use loudspeakers to preach jehad

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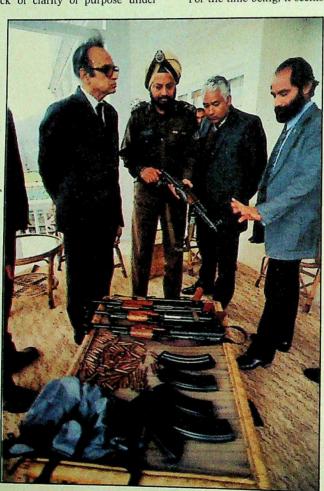
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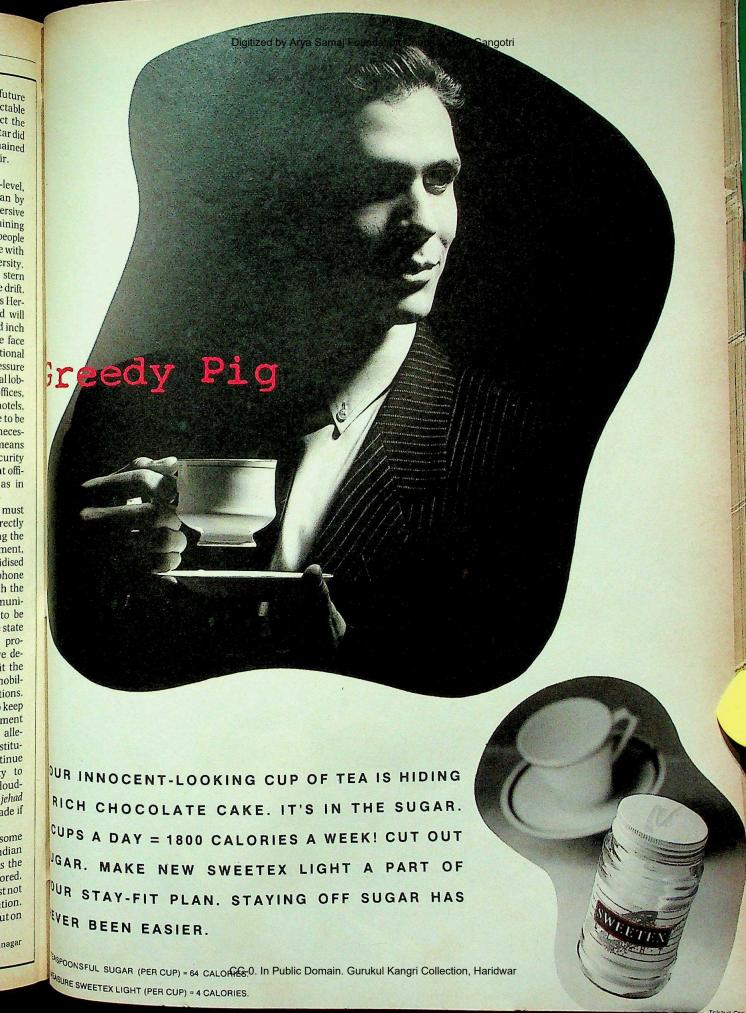
Jagmohan and securitymen inspect captured arms

against the state? These are the hard decisions to be made if India's writ is to run again in the valley.

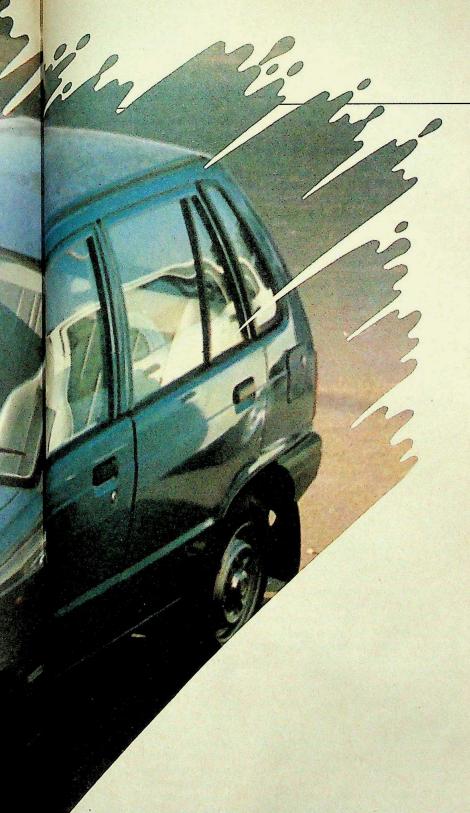
In Kashmir—where the Centre has invested some Rs 70,000 crore in subsidies, what to say of the blood of Indian soldiers in two wars—the nation faces what is perhaps the gravest challenge to the ideas on which its integrity is moored. There are no soft options left. And temporary reverses must not be allowed to reverse the process of a sustained reclamation. The country can no longer afford to behave like a tenant put on notice to vacate somebody else's property.

-INDERJIT BADHWAR in Srinagar

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KRISHNASWAMI SUNDARJI

"If pushed beyond a point by Pakistan, we will retaliate"

WITH the level of tension between Islamabad and New Delhi touching a new high over the Kashmir issue, the threat of another conflict has become a very real one. Former army chief General Krishnaswami Sundarji is no longer involved in working out his favourite war games, but even in retirement, the 'thinking man's general' has lost none of his incisive evaluation of defence matters. In a recent interview with Deputy Editor DILIP BOBB and Special Correspondent RAJ CHENGAPPA, Sundarji spoke about the current threat perception and its possible outcome. Excerpts:

Q. What are the probabilities of war?

A. I believe the probabilities are pretty low and I have my reasons for coming to this conclusion. You can look at it under two heads. One is in the conventional capabilities sphere. The other is in the perceived nuclear weapon capability and how that changes the ball game. Our deterrent strategy always has been to try and prevent an adventure by the other side in Kashmir. To put it as simplistically as possible, the strategy is that please don't start anything in Kashmir whether it's covert or overt or overtly covert or covertly overt.

Q. The Indian Government believes that Pakistan has already started a overtly covert operation in Kashmir. So how does the deterrent strategy fit into the current context?

A. Quite apart from exercising our right to defend ourselves locally in Kashmir, we will, pushed beyond a point, retaliate at a place and time of our choosing. And if that happens, please be on notice that when the dust settles, you will be hurting yourself much more than we would. That was the strategy. Now, let us see whether this kind of strategy has been impaired in the current situation to an extent that it looks as if it is inoperable. I think it is not.

Q. Why?

A. I will take the conventional aspect first. Going into the decade of the '70s, I'd say '72 through '79, we had a very marked edge over Pakistan in conventional forces in quantitative as well as qualitative terms. Post-'79 Afghanistan and the mas-

sive inputs of aid that Pakistan has received, certainly this edge of ours has been eroded. That's undoubted. Nevertheless, I do not for a moment think that it's eroded to an extent where the essential framework of our strategy stands impaired in any way. It is still very effective. And if somebody thinks it's impaired then it's either wishful thinking or stupidity.

Q. According to defence experts, Pakistan believes it has achieved military parity in some areas. Could this tempt it into a military adventure?

A. You see, quite often, you say things for internal consumption. And every time you repeat yourself, the danger of believing it as a fact increases. I hope that kind of danger hasn't occurred on the other side. so this can't be a reason for sudden flexing of muscles and getting belligerent. Therefore, perhaps one could look at the other side of the equation which is the nuclear weapon equation. It's well known that both our countries' declared policy is the use of nuclear technology only for peaceful purposes. And we do not intend to go in for nuclear weapons. But you can't gainsay the fact that any sensible planner sitting on this side of the border is going to assume Pakistan does indeed have nuclear weapon capability. And by the same token, I rather suspect the view from the other side is going to look very similar.

Q. Is this the perception or policy? A. Obviously, policies are made on basic perceptions. Therefore, two possibilities occur to me. On the other side, there may be the odd person who has kidded himself into believing that they have the nuclear weapon capability and we don't. Then again a temptation arises that they might exploit this kind of hoped-for imbalance which would in turn lead to a paralysis of will on our side. They could believe that they have a one-sided nuclear weapon capability and therefore we are going to be weak-kneed and not do anything about it. I am not suggesting that it is true. I am giving you a hypothesis. So, if it is such a hypothesis that some people

reality the better.

Q. Presuming that their planners

are working on on the other side then it's

stupid. The sooner they wake up to this

have also taken into account India's opethat nuclear weapon capability, what then? he conve

A. Then it is possible in theoretical terms to argue that nuclear weapon capability on both sides would inhibit either side for going in for an overt conventional military operation for fear that either by intent or by accident you might end up with actual use of nuclear weapons. Because of the enormous amount of damage these weapons will do in absolute terms to both sides.

Q. You mean Pakistan may feel because of its nuclear deterrent we may not execute our conventional strategy?

A. One school of thought might feel that because of this kind of perception, India might be weak-kneed in executing its conventional deterrent strategy which is professional. They may feel it may not be potent and, therefore, let us take a chance and keep it as close to covert as we can and

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Crom 1972 to 1979, we had such an enormous military edge that if we had any intentions of harming Pakistan, we would have damn well done it during that time.

Post-Afghanistan, our edge has undoubtedly been eroded to some extent but it has not impaired our defence strategy in any way.

topethat we won't have the b.... to execute the conventional strategy. That might be one kind of thinking. If it is, I believe this fould be terribly wrong on their part.

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Q. Do they believe this scenario? A. That there are people who think the this is a fact. Stephen Cohen states hat in some of his interviews with Pakiani generals a few years back, they tually postulated this kind of a situation here if they had nuclear weapons, it ould perhaps give them an opportunity detach Kashmir from India. It is not omething out of our fevered imaginaon. It is a deliberate statement made by akistani generals. The point I am makis that this is a fairly feasible hypothes. But that, I believe, would be a fallaous way of thinking on their part ecause I don't think any government in dia can sit on its hands and do nothing bout overtly covert operations of Paki-

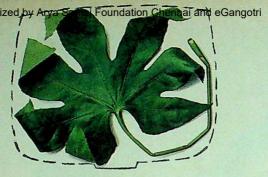
stan in Kashmir and not execute its stated conventional military strategy. They are living in some kind of a fool's paradise if they believe there might be constraints or restraints on this side and we may not execute that philosophy. If you do indeed enter into a conventional overt military operation, and if that slips into, by design or by accident, a nuclear exchange, limited as it would be, even then while damage on both sides in absolute terms would be considerable, there is absolutely no doubt in anybody's mind that in proportionate terms, Pakistan would suffer hell of a lot more than we would. If they had any sense, they should not even think in these terms.

Q. The difference this time is that the level of dissatisfaction in Kashmir has never been as serious as it is today. There are other domestic factors for Pakistan. Now, would those compulsions be enough for them to attempt a conventional operation?

A. These extraneous inducements are there but they are fundamentally internal, from their domestic context. In addition, perhaps conditions in Kashmir are tempting. The current conditions are not something that they have engineered, it's something we've also done or not done in the last few years in Kashmir. So, all these do operate, but nevertheless, when they come to the bottomline, any sensible planner on that side has to take the likely upshot into account.

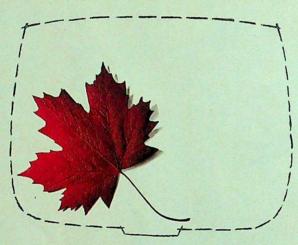
Q. What would it be in your opinion? A. This would revolve under. I think.

two heads. First: what are the chances of their ability to create a situation where Kashmir valley detaches itself like a ripe plum under its own steam, ably assisted by any covert operations? If that can happen then why should they go in for



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any overt operation where they get badly hurt? That of course, from their point of view, would be the ideal situation. But that is something which I don't think is going to happen. Then you have gotto go to the next step, where you have gotto work out what do you do next. You can make the covert operation a little more overt as you go along, with the socalled "volunteers" from Pak Occupied Kashmir operating with weapons, training, inspiration and plans from Pakistan. Or it could be the unemployed mujahedin coming in from the Afghan lot. The third level one can think of is "volunteers" from the Pakistan armed forces whose hearts are beating for Indiaheld Kashmir or whatever they call it.

at sea, that if we had any intentions of harming Pakistan, balkanising Pakistan or undoing Pakistan, we would have damn well done it during that time.

Q. But given the fact that our military edge has eroded, people are worrying about how well we are going to prepare ourselves if it comes to a clash with Pakistan today.

A. I think we can defend ourselves very adequately indeed. Of that there is no doubt. If our intentions had been dishonourable vis-a-vis Pakistan, that would have been the best period to carry out a dishonourable intention. Even though we had that capability and edge, that we did not do so is proof of our honourable intentions. And I am not decrying or bloody great to be either taken to the peak of excellence by a few good guys or to be brought down by a few asses. So, I don't think that's relevant because the bulk of the leadership is good. The officers' leadership is by and large good. For example, in Sri Lanka, there has been an enormous criticism in the press of a high proportion of officer casualties. We ought to wear that as a proud badge. We, in our army, our young officers, lead from the front instead of hiding in some bloody hole somewhere in the rear and saving their bloody skin. And there are gentlemen in the press who have written to say that there is something wrong with the Indian Army because the officer casualties are very high. Our officers'

ur officers' leadership is very solid; and battles are won or lost by the junior officers' leadership, not by some disgruntled generals.

Q. And if this doesn't work?

A. If we can regain adequate control over the law and order in Kashmir, and if in the process, the drift stops there and then nothing happens, what do they do? Do they stop there or do they go to make it more overt or indeed use their armed forces only? Now it is this kind of recreation which you have got to again get to the bottomline of what are the chances for their success? The bottomline is that they are going to be hurt a heck of a lot more than we are and without achieving the objective or the alleged objective. In other words, whether the game is worth the candle. I think it is not.

Q. Would we like to escalate?

A. Why should we? Our philosophy and strategy at no stage has been to push them into a war, to go to war with them. From 1972 to 1979-80, we had such an enormous edge, qualitatively and quantitatively, on the ground, in the air, and

bemoaning the fact that this edge has been lost. No. That is not a required edge because we have no bad intentions.

Q. What about the fact that our defence budget has been frozen or even cut in some areas because of financial constraints?

A. It is very simplistic to turn around and say that we have had a budget cut of 'X' hundred crores last year and therefore the battle combat efficiency has dropped by that percentage. It doesn't translate immediately. It might have a multiplied effect five years hence. And extra expenditure may not give you the same output in the same proportion if it is ill spent. So, it's much too simplistic to be able to expect a direct correlation between the input and the output, and that too in a short time-frame.

Q. One of the perceptions is that, apart from machines, the question is leadership and morale.

A. I think the Indian Army is too

leadership, believe me, is very, very solid and battles are won or lost by the junior officers' leadership, not by some disgruntled generals. Therefore, you can rest easy.

Q. How would you assess the other sider

A. I would be very foolish if I were to turn around and say that they are no good. It would be equally foolish to say that they are the cat's whiskers. They are like any other professional army. You will find that if you are engaged in a war. there will be high morale in certain areas and low morale in certain others. It is not a commodity which is special to one side. So, nobody should kid themselves into believing that either side has got a corner or an inalienable right to either better leadership or better training or better morale. I think Pakistan made that mistake in '65 by kidding itself into believing that one Pakistani is equal to 10 Indians or some such bloody crap.

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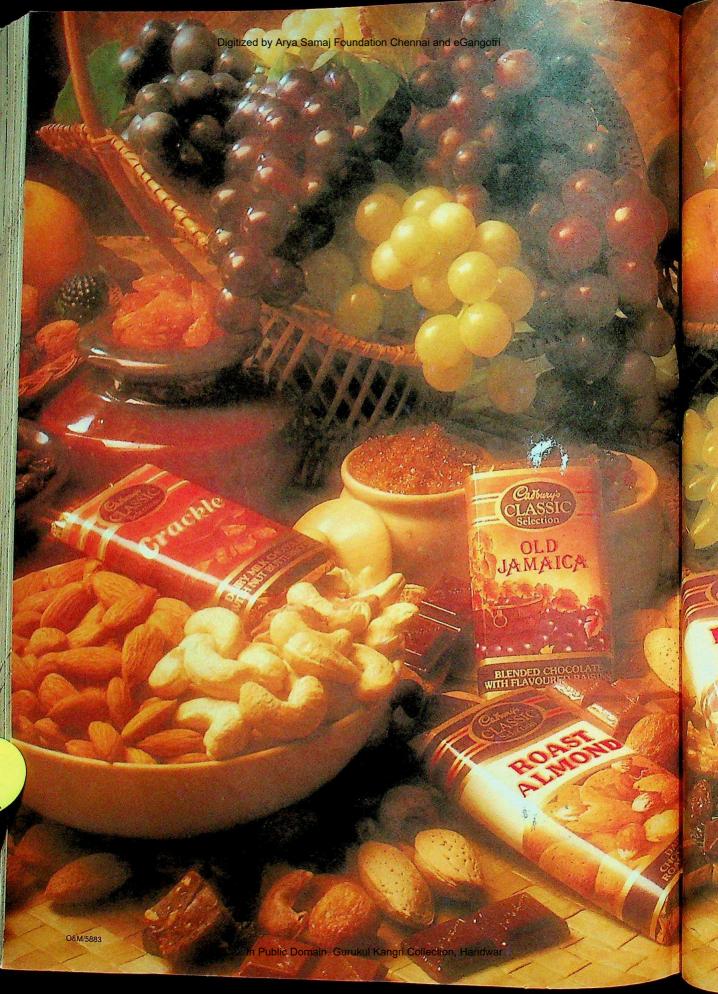
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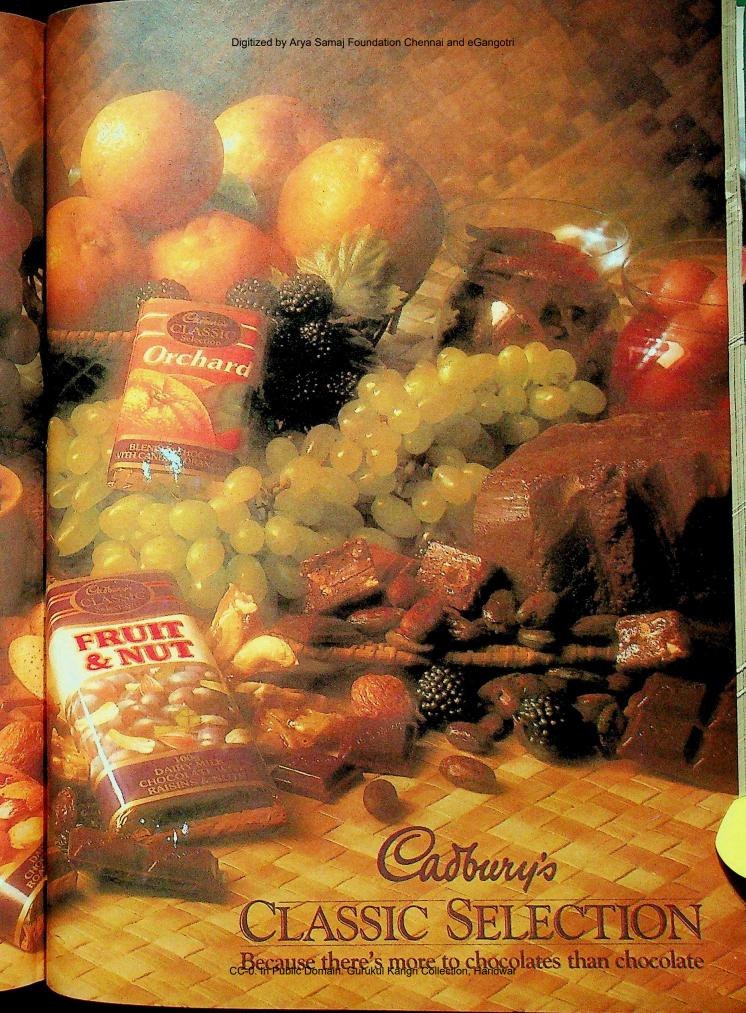
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WATCH INDUSTRY

A Titanic Upheaval

The advent of quartz watches, a bewildering array of models and a retailing revolution have set the watch industry racing ahead.

T is an idea whose time has come. Literally. Overnight, it seems, India's once-staid watch industry has exploded into colourful life with a bewildering range of trendy wristwear. Interchangeable straps, wat-

ches in every colour of the

pany's production figures. In 1988-89, just three years after setting up shop. Titan accounted for Rs 70 crore of the Rs 115-crore quartz watch market. Last

year, the company made 1.5 million quartz watches of the 2.5 million made in India. Says Anil Manchanda, executive vice-president of Titan: "We keep bringing in new products, and give the people what they've watches produced by Allwyn in the Trendy range have sold out.

The boom in the watch industry has also meant bad times for watch smugglers, if the declining hauls of smuggled watches are any indication (estimates say a tenth of the total smuggled quantity is nabbed each year). The annual demand for watches in the country is estimated at 18 million pieces, of which the domestic industry meets only half. Of the other half, nearly 60 per cent is smuggled, only 40

nearly 60 per cent is smuggled, only 40 per cent is legitimately brought in by Indians returning from abroad.

"Smugglers too are vacating the price range we

TITAN

now downmarket."

XERXES DESAI
Managing Director, Titan Watches

work from-they're

MAHESH BHATT

Courtesy JOHNSON & CO

rainbow, dials with the phases of the moon, the innovations appear endless. The names are as exciting as the variety of models on offer: Titan's Aqura, Classic, Royale and Exacta range; Hyderabad Allwyn's Trendy; and нмт's Elegance.

Going hand in hand with the cornucopia of models is a marketing revolution of sorts. Companies are sprucing up their retailing set-ups, setting up plush exclusive showrooms that look like boutiques in five-star hotels, and launching attractive prize schemes.

The catalyst for all this churning up is Titan Watches, the joint venture by Tatas and the Tamil Nadu Government, which has rewritten the rules of the game for the watch industry. In a market starved of choices, Titan is offering a mind-boggling variety of slick designer quartz watches—at last count, it had introduced 400 models. And backing this is a strong marketing effort. In the process, it has turned the watch from an item of utility into an aspect of personal adornment.

The results are reflected in the com-

never had in 40 years. They (the competitors) just don't know how to respond; and by the time they catch up with us, we've changed again."

Quite some way behind Titan are the public sector firms, HMT and Hyderabad Allwyn, which last year produced roughly five lakh watches each. Other players include Indo-French Time Industries with its T.S. Watches and the Bangalore-based Bifora which has had a difficult time and is now diverting its attention to the clock market.

While the cut-throat competition has kept all companies on their toes, it's also helped all of them by giving a boost to the watch market. Three years ago, growth was an anaemic 8-10 per cent a year; today it's glowing at 15-18 per cent. And Titan is not the only company that is reaping rewards. Says Hyderabad Allwyn Managing Director R.P. Agarwal: "The watch has become a fashion accessory and our innovation of giving multicoloured detachable straps with dials has paid off very well." All the 3.3 lakh

The main reason for the rampant smuggling was of course the lack of indigenously manufactured quartz watches. Now, with a flood of Indian models, the picture is changing rapidly. The haul of smuggled watches last year was Rs 42.75 crore, drastically lower than the Rs 135 crore of the previous year. Declares Titan Managing Director Xerxes Desai: "Smugglers have vacated the price range we operate in. They are going downmarket."

To be sure, while most of the exciting new action is in quartz watches, India is still a handwound country where quartz watches account for a bare 14 per cent of the market. And in this market, the Rs 200-crore HMT remains the unquestioned leader. Villagers in remote areas still swear by "Chimti" watches. M.R. Naidu, HMT's chairman, remains bullish about the handwound segment. One reason is the strength of his company's network in rural areas. The other is what he calls the sentimental value of a handwound watch. Says he: "You've got to care for it daily, maintain it. You grow

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"Watches are now fashion accessories. So, our detachable straps with dials have paid off." R.P. AGARWAL Managing Director, Hyderabad Allwyn ALLWYN

ttached to it. Indians prefer sturdy, relible watches that are handwound. martz watches sell only in throwaway ocieties." He points out that he will be exporting a million mechanicals to erstwhile collaborator Citizen of Japan.

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HMT says it is not perturbed about the litan blitz. Nor is Allwyn: it is not going to educe production of its mechanical range, but instead is increasing output of selfwound watches from 4.5 lakh to 12.5 lakh.

Nevertheless, the trend worldwide gems to be towards quartz and it's likely hat India won't be an exception. Twenty years ago, almost all the 200 million watches made across the world were mechanical. Today, of the 685 million watches made, only 115 million are

mechanical. нмт moved against the tend. Says Desai: "HMT was neecting the quartz segment. When nobody in the world was putting money in mechanicals, HMT was installing plants that would make me-

> "Quartz watches sell in urban areas but India is rural."

> > M.R. NAIDU, Chairman, HMT

chanical watches."

Titan, convinced that India was going to join the world bandwagon, gambled by placing all its eggs in the quartz basket, ignoring pessimists who advised it to diversify risks and make mechanical watches as well. It had figures that seemed to justify the gamble: in India, only 35 per cent of watches were sold in rural areas. and 44 per cent of the country's watches were owned by just 18 per cent of its people. In other words, watch ownership was heavily skewed towards the urban segment. Clearly, there were a lot of urban, affluent wrists clamouring for

more watches. And Titan was more than happy to oblige. With an aquamarine dial to match your sky-blue dupatta, a cream

A. PRABHAKAR RAO

dial to go with your fawn shoes. Says Manchanda: "нмт behaved like a typical monopoly and did not innovate. They were telling us we were spoiling customers by offering them so much choice. It failed to see the

market need.' Simultaneously, Titan ushered in a retailing revolution. Already it has opened 17 plush showrooms with plans to have 50 by the year-end. The company's showroom in Bombay is certainly a hint of things to come. The plush marble-tiled

shop has watches gleaming out of showcases, placed on pastel-shaded mats, while attractive women in silk saris float around with a polite "May I help you". One result: dealers are now seeking Titan's help to refurbish their own stores. Shop windows, signages and displays are

changing rapidly.

Faced with the Titan blitzkrieg, HMT, once the undisputed leader of the country's watch industry, has been struggling to maintain its lead. It too is beginning to subscribe to the quartz revolution. One reason for HMT's caution hitherto may have been that its first attempt to launch quartz watches a decade ago bombed. Now, the company is convinced that the market has changed. The handwound watch market is declining at the rate of 8 per cent a year. In 1995,





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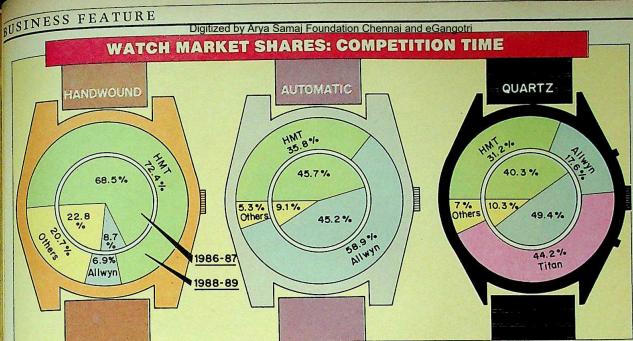
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HMT expects that nearly 75 per cent of the 32 million watches made in the country will be quartz. To prepare for that, it is converting its Tumkur plant in Karnataka to quartz. After that, it will be the turn of the Nainital plant. Next year, of HMT's total production of 6.5 million watches, as many as 1.5 million will be quartz.

Also, like Titan, HMT seems to have woken up to the importance of marketing. Until now, it had depended on its vast distribution network to peddle its watches. Now it's learning a couple of new tricks. Currently, it is running a Festival of Time prize scheme, under which buyers of HMT watches stand to win any of 1,250 prizes. The top prize: a Maruti Omni.

нмт has also launched a new-look advertising campaign, though many, it looks suspiciously like Titan's. Laughs Desai: "I have concluded that imitation is a form of flattery." But competitors are not amused at another HMT action: the company has been telling its dealers not to stock competitors' watches.

Whatever the propriety of its actions, HMT's efforts seem to be slowly paying off. Its up-market Elegance range has reportedly done well in the market. And in increasing production of quartz watches, it has signalled its intention of giving Titan a better

fight in the second round of the watch wars than in the first.

LLWYN too aims to hold on for dear life to its market share, and if possible, increase it. The company complains that it is hamstrung by lack of advertising resources to match the budgets of HMT and Titan (reportedly Rs 4 crore a year each). Allwyn's tie-up with Japan's Seiko has ended but it is negotiating for transfer of designs. On some points, the company scores over Titan. For instance, its superior battery enables it to give a three-year warranty, against two by Titan and one by HMT. Then, some users complain that Titan watch straps are weak. Titan's excuse: it is helpless, because strap manufacture is reserved for the small-scale sector.

Nevertheless, despite these minor glitches, Titan has reason to feel confident. Its tie-up with Ebauches of France gives it movement technology. And a tieup with Casio, expected to materialise by the end of the year, will enable it to introduce digital (quartz with digital display), analog (quartz with dial display) and anadigi watches. With these worldclass collaborations in its pocket, the company aims to be a major player in the world market. It has made a beginning by exporting small numbers to Dubai and France.

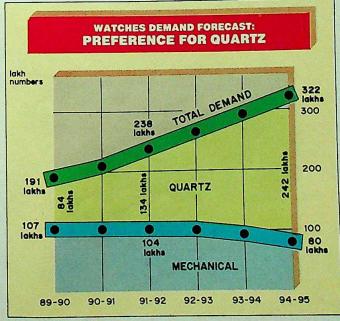
In India. Titan will continue to unleash new models. By May, it expects to

Charts by B.K. SHARMA

place 18-carat gold watches on the market. By Diwali, it hopes to put out gold-plated watches studded with precious stones. Before the year is out, it will introduce ethnic watches for women. In the works are custom-made limited edition watches by Indian masters like M.F. Husain and Laxman Shrestha.

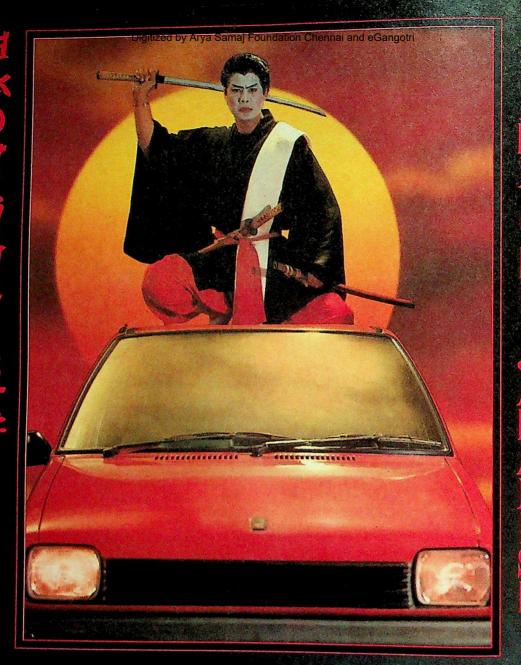
So, as before, the company plans to be the trendsetter, setting the terms for the rest of the industry. For a company that's barely three years old, it's a Titanic achievement of sorts.

> -SALIL TRIPATHI in Bangalore and Hosur with AMARNATH K. MENON in Hyderabad



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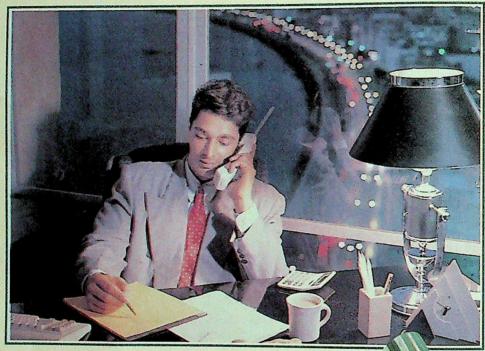
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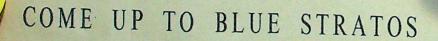


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NECK AND NECK RACE

VEN as the Indian corporate world is all agog about the fate of Reliance's nominees on the board of directors of Larsen & Toubro (L&T), certain developments in the Bombay-based engineering company have gone virtually unnoticed. L&T is currently running neck and neck with the Essar group in a race to bag the contract for a Rs 1,300-crore, one million tonne capacity, 100 per cent exportoriented alumina project which is to come up in Koraput district, Orissa.

Early last year, Essar had applied to the Government for permission to set up an alumina project in Maharashtra. The letter of intent was granted in September. Then, L&T put in a similar application for Andhra Pradesh. In January, L&T decided that Orissa would be a better location for the project and asked the Government to change its application accordingly. Soon thereafter, Essar too decided to change the location of its proposed project to the same state. The stop-watch is running fast. Let's see who breasts the tape.

GEARING FOR BATTLE

HE Parle group does not believe in letting the grass grow under its feet even as it now realises that a head-on fight with Pepsi in the soft drink market is inevitable. The group recently test-marketed a new tomato drink in tetrapacks in southern India. The tomato drink, the third in the Frooti range after the mango and orange drinks, is likely to be launched all over the country towards the end of April. With Pepsi already having set up its tomato processing line in Punjab, Parle's Ramesh Chauhan seems to be saying that he is no different from his biggest rival-to-be.

DEREGULATION IN THE AIR

ILL the early '80s, Indian Airlines' writ ran unquestioned in the domestic civil aviation market. Even Air India had to pay three-fourths of what it earned on domestic routes to Indian Airlines. The mid-'80s saw the situation changing. In a magnanimous mood, Indian Airlines allowed Air India to retain 40 per cent of its earnings from the domestic sector. Now things are again going to be different. With deregulation having become the new buzzword for airlines the world over, the Civil Aviation Ministry is believed to have decided that the revenue from domestic sales will henceforth not be shared by the two airlines. Thus, with desi deregulation round the corner, Indian Airlines will have to face competition on its lucrative local trunk routes from an unexpected quarter: big brother Air India.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

HE two Asian giants, India and China, are gearing up for what may prove to be an interesting confrontation. The battlefield: the annual meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to be held this time in New Delhi. The time: early May. Way back in 1986, India and China had agreed that the two countries would not unilaterally approach the ADB's soft-loan window, the Asian Development Fund, for financial assistance. The two countries would act together or not at all, the agreement stated. Then came May 1989 and the killings at Beijing's Tiananmen Square. And the ADB bosses decided to put China in the dog-house. India now sees an opportunity. When the Asian Development Fund comes up for replenishment at the New Delhi meeting, India is likely to disassociate itself from the 1986 agreement in the hope of availing credit on easy terms. Presumably China will not be sitting idle.

CLOTHING THE WORLD

XPORTS of ready-made garments from India have risen at a phenomenal pace in the recent past. Garment exports today constitute the single largest net foreign exchange earner for the country, accounting for over 11 per cent of India's total exports. Last year, exports exceeded the

Chart by B.K. SHARMA ORT OF READY-MADE GARMENTS
THE RISE BUT ... Rs. 2,148.6 crore 1,857.4 1995 (TARGET 1989

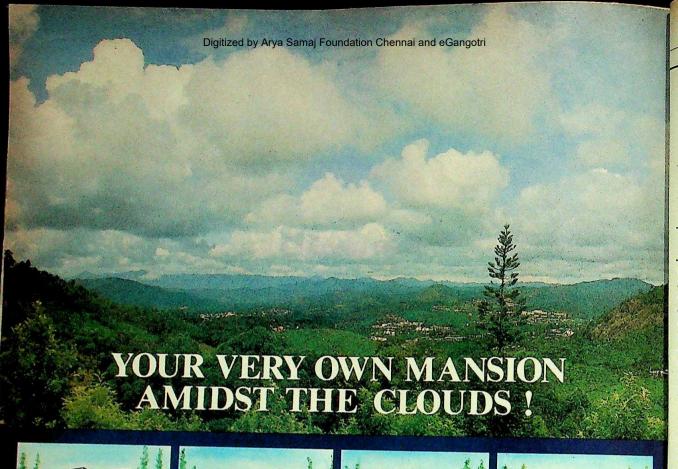
Rs 2,400-crore target by over Rs 700 crore (see chart). And if some believe that this is largely because of the devaluation of the rupee, they're wrong. For even in US dollar terms, exports jumped by over 24 per cent between 1988 and 1989, according to the Apparel Export Promotion Council.

But despite their creditable performance, small manufacturers-who account for the bulk of exports-feel the Government's new export-import policy has given them a raw deal. Thus, they contend that the Rs10,000-crore garment export target for the final year of the eighth plan (1990-95) may prove elusive. The Government, however, insists that its policy is not intended to discriminate against small garment exporters and that it is open to discussion. That means a couple of new notifications may be on the cards.

DONKEY BUSINESS

N unusual news item seems to have escaped the attention of the Indian media. In late February, Reuters put out a brief story from Paris which stated that an Indian army colonel had visited France in musti on a "top secret" defence procurement mission. Guess what this colonel purchased? He bought no less than 22 pedigreed donkeys for use by the army's mountain regiments in the rarefied climes of Ladakh and Siachen. Defence Ministry sources insist that no kickbacks were involved in this crucial deal. In other words, no donkey business.

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On the Firing Line

The Government moves to prise Larsen & Toubro from the Ambanis' tough battle on its hands. grasp but it has a

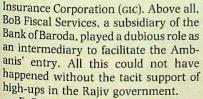
NDECISIVE, weak, confused. These words have been repeatedly used to describe the four-month-old National Front Government. But take a second look. Last fortnight, in its boldest move yet, the V.P. Singh Government declared that it meant business. The target: the Reliance group headed by Dhirubhai Ambani. The stake: control of the Rs1,000-crore Larsen & Toubro (L&T), the country's largest private sector engineering company, a fabulous jewel in the Ambani crown.

In October 1988, the Ambanis had waltzed onto the board of L&T. The controversial "take-over" was achieved with more than a little help from stateowned financial institutions like the Unit Trust of India (UTI), the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) and the General

tures. Reliance spokesmen, predictably, deny this and claim the money came from "internal accruals".

But the new Government is not willing to take the Ambanis' statements at face value. Instead it has chosen to attack. So on the last day of March, LIC Chairman N.K. Shinkar served a notice on L&T's board, asking it to convene an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) of shareholders to consider a proposal to remove four Reliance nominees from the board and replace them with representatives of the financial institutions.

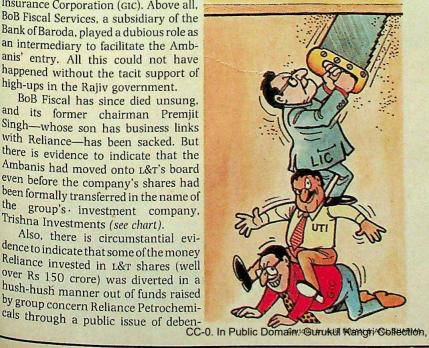
The Reliance public relations machine-now beefed up with the induction of a former official of the United States Information Service (usis) and a former public relations manager from Es-



BoB Fiscal has since died unsung, and its former chairman Premjit Singh—whose son has business links with Reliance—has been sacked. But there is evidence to indicate that the Ambanis had moved onto L&T's board even before the company's shares had been formally transferred in the name of the group's investment company. Trishna Investments (see chart).

Also, there is circumstantial evidence to indicate that some of the money Reliance invested in L&T shares (well over Rs 150 crore) was diverted in a hush-hush manner out of funds raised by group concern Reliance Petrochemicorts, which had faced a similar takeover six years ago-worked overtime to counter LIC's move. A company press release called the action illegal, antidemocratic and motivated. It added that the move had been "anticipated" and was inspired by a "ranking civil servant". Further, the company alleged that "this government is spurred only by its petty pursuits of revenge and repression"

At a press conference in the capital, Mukesh Ambani was hard-pressed to explain to journalists why the LIC move was illegal. He said that LIC should have ascribed reasons for wanting to remove four L&T directors (LIC spokesmen say it is not obliged to do so). He insisted that the Government's action was akin to "backdoor nationalisation". When a scribe present suggested that Reliance was in no position to complain since it had earlier been accused of "privatising the Government of India." Mukesh Haridwar



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retorted: "But things have changed."

Indeed they had. With the removal of four of the 19 directors of L&T, the Reliance group won't be able to exercise management control over the company. But before that happens, a fierce battle is on the cards. For both sides seem evenly matched. At least that's what they contend. The financial institutions together hold around 37 per cent of L&T's equity

while the Ambani group spokesmen claim its holdings are 33 to 34 per cent—a claim yet to be verified. Not surprisingly, both groups are keen on garnering proxies (voting rights of shareholders) before the EGM takes place.

The price of L&T's share, which was languishing at around Rs 80 until recently, leapt to Rs 120 within days of the LIC notice. Then it crashed to Rs 93 after

reports that the Bombay Stock Exchange was moving the scrip to the 'cash' list (which would curb speculation).

Proxy battles are hardly new. They have occurred ad nauseam in celebrated take-over bids for companies like Shaw Wallace, Gammon, Escorts and DCM. But this is perhaps the first time that the financial institutions are directly involved in a battle to control a company.

Sequence of Events



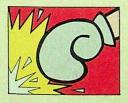
SETTING THE STAGE

1988

May: Bank of Baroda floats subsidiary BoB Fiscal Services, headed by the then bank chairman Premjit Singh. July: There is speculation that the Chhabrias and the Ambanis are vying for control of L&T.

July 15: BoB Fiscal requests UTI and LIC to sell shares to it.

August 1-3: BoB Fiscal accepts L&T shares valued at Rs 27 crore from UTI and LIC.



THE STING

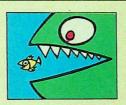
August 5: BoB Fiscal receives a credit of Rs 24 crore from its parent as well as a call deposit of Rs 30 crore from stockbroking firm V.B. Desai Financial Services. On the same day, it pays UTI and LIC and signs a contract note with V.B. Desai to sell 25 lakh L&T shares for Rs 29.75 crore.

August: V.B. Desai allegedly receives around Rs 30 crore from four satellite companies of Reliance: Skylab Detergents, Oscar Chemicals, Maxwell Dyes and Prelab Synthetics. Reliance Petrochemicals' Rs 594-crore public issue is over-subscribed. L&T receives a Rs 300-crore contract from Reliance Petrochemicals. Trishna Invest-

ments & Leasing allegedly strikes a deal with V.B. Desai to acquire L&T shares at a future date.

September 5: BoB Fiscal accepts 14 lakh L&T shares from GIC and its subsidiaries.

September 8: V.B. Desai sends BoB Fiscal a cheque for Rs 29.75 crore.



THE 'TAKE-OVER'

September: L&T board decides to induct Mukesh Ambani and solicitor M.L. Bhakta, nominees of Reliance which by now is supposed to have a 12-per cent stake in L&T.

October 11: L&T board resolves to register shares in the name of BoB Fiscal. Mukesh and Bhakta formally appointed to the board.

October-November: V.B. Desai makes payments in phases to BoB Fiscal as certificates for 37 lakh L&T shares are received for transfer. Fresh forms given to V.B. Desai for two lakh L&T shares for transfer to BoB Fiscal.

December 30: L&T Board decides that N.M. Desai will continue as chairman even after his term expires in March 1989. Mukesh named vice-chairman, Anil Ambani co-opted on board. Trishna formally becomes a Reliance subsidiary.

1989

January 6: BoB Fiscal transfers 39 lakh L&T shares to Trishna.

April 30: Crucial L&T board meetings take place. In a surprise move, Chairman N.M. Desai steps down and is replaced by Dhirubhai Ambani.

June: L&T announces Rs 920-crore issue of convertible debentures to provide supplier's credit to Reliance Petro and finance unnamed projects.



THE ATTACK

August: Indian Express discloses that after the debentures are converted into shares. Reliance's stake will go up to 32 per cent while that of the financial institutions and the public will fall. An EGM of L&T is convened to approve the terms of the issue. Chairman Dhirubhai trims the issue to Rs 820 crore and drops a controversial resolution which would have allowed L&T to advance Rs 1,000 crore to other companies.

September: A public interest petition is filed in Bombay High Court challenging issue. The court dismisses the petition, maintaining that L&T does not belong to the Reliance group.

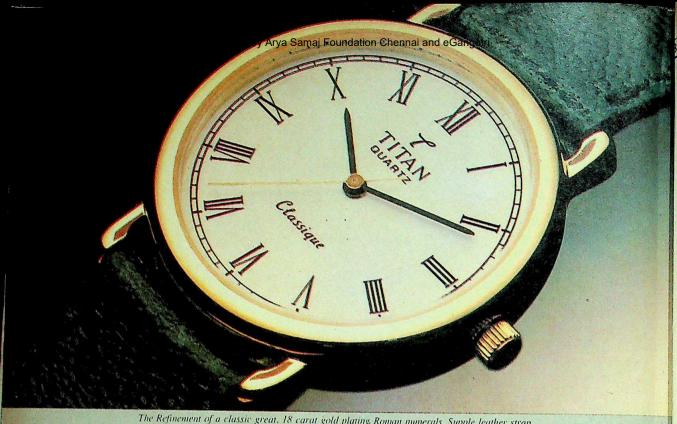
October: L&T public issue opens. Appeals filed against Bombay High Court judgement in Supreme Court which accepts the Ambani offer to sell L&T shares acquired by Trishna back to BoB Fiscal. Petitioners demand EGM to decide whether Reliance nominees can continue on L&T board.

December: National Front Government comes to power. Bank of Baroda chairman asked to proceed on leave.

1990

March: BoB Fiscal wound up. UTI chairman replaced.

April: LIC calls for EGM to remove Reliance nominees from L&T board.



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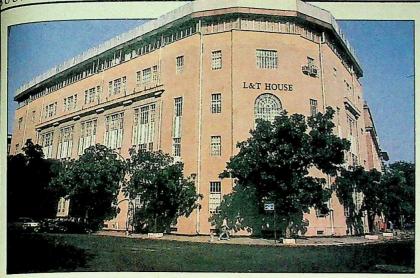
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L&T House: battle for control

But a crucial question here is whether Lic is acting independently—Lic officials confirm that board approval was sought before the notice was sent—or under pressure from New Delhi.

LIC, after all, was the same institution that received strictures from the Bombay High Court in December 1984 for its role in the Swraj Paul-Escorts affair. But the high court judgement was later overruled by the Supreme Court. Says an LIC spokesman: "The Supreme Court judgement in the Escorts case gave the right to any shareholder to ask for an EGM to replace or appoint directors. We have carefully studied the law."

The Lic view is sought to be dismissed by Reliance spokesmen. "Why have the

institutions targeted L&T and not other companies like Tata Steel and Calcutta Electricity Supply, to name only two, where the institutional stake is larger than that of the promoters?" they ask. Says Mukesh: "The day we bought L&T shares, BoB Fiscal sold 5 per cent of Acc's (Associated Cement) shares to Darbari Seth. Why isn't that being questioned?"

While Reliance feels that it is being harassed and victimised, *Indian Express* Financial Adviser and Ambani critic S. Gurumurthy argues that the institutions are only "undoing a wrong" committed in the past when BoB Fiscal flouted norms by passing on 7 per cent of

L&T's equity to Trishna which enabled the Ambanis to enter L&T.

After Premjit Singh was removed from the Bank of Baroda chairmanship. there was a three-month lull. When Mukesh Ambani met Finance Minister Madhu Dandavate and Finance Secretary Bimal Jalan in early March, he got the impression that Reliance's position in L&T would remain intact. That's what he told certain heads of financial institutions. Subsequent events proved him wrong. In mid-March, the Government wound up BoB Fiscal. No reasons were advanced, but for the banking community it was an unprecedented development. Says a senior official: "BoB Fiscal was unceremoniously dumped into the Ganga for its sins.'

Then came the removal of UTI chairman M.J. Pherwani, whose extended term was due to expire in July 1991. Banking sources in Bombay say the new Government felt that Pherwani was "uncomfortably" close to the private sector, specifically Reliance. Pherwani was not available for comment, but two days after his exit from UTI, LIC served its notice on L&T.

Timing was a key factor. The LIC notice was sent to L&T on April 2 and under the Companies Act, the company has to convene the EGM within 45 days, that is, by May 17—one week before May 23 when L&T's shareholding pattern starts changing on account of conversion of debentures into shares. Reliance sources claim that the EGM was timed to "deprive lakhs of shareholders of the right to exercise their vote", but LIC spokesmen deny the charge.

Why are the Ambanis so keen on retaining their hold on L&r's board? One obvious reason is that their association with the country's premier engineering company enhances the credibility of the Reliance group. Besides, L&r's single

The Chhabrias' Clout

N late-1987 having emerged victor after a protracted battle to control Shaw Wallace, Dubaibased tycoon Manohar R. Chhabria started picking up L&T shares from the market. The Company Law Board had served a notice on the board of directors of L&T alleging that it was unduly favouring the then chairman N.M. Desai. Chhabria, sensing trouble at the top. moved in for a possible kill. By July 1988, Chhabria's stake had grown to 1.5 per cent of L&T's equity. This set off waves of speculation in the stock-markets that the country's largest engineering firm was about to be taken over. The Ambanis then emerged as a strong contender for the same prize.

Chhabria was reportedly pres-

sured to sell his holdings in L&T. But he refused. Nettled, the Ambanis hit back by acquiring a 5-per cent stake

in the Chhabria group's flagship company, Dunlop. What is interesting is that this purchase was done by BoB Fiscal, the same merchant banking arm of Bank of Baroda which was instrumental in assisting the Ambanis to acquire L&T shares. Now, with a proxy war about to take place, Chhabria is being assiduously wooed by the Ambanis and the finaninstitutions. anybody's guess which side will get his support.



Manu Chhabria: sudden importance

biggest client at present is Reliance; the company has extended Rs 300 crore of suppliers' credit for equipment in Reliance Petrochemicals' naphthacracker complex coming up at Hazira.

Above all, Dhirubhai is said to be having grand plans for L&T. Once Hazira comes on stream, not only will the company have gained considerable experience in building crackers but Dhirubhai is believed to have worked out a deal for full transfer of technology to L&T—technology which is currently the preserve of a handful of multinationals. This, it is hoped, would enable L&T to independently bid for petrochemicals project contracts anywhere in the world.

Highly-placed sources in the financial institutions feel the Government had three options before it to make the Ambanis fall in line. The first was to strike a deal to make them 'voluntarily' surrender management control over L&T. The quid pro quo would be that Reliance would be treated with kid gloves. The second option was the administering of "slow poison" to the Reliance group, that is, government refusal to clear new project proposals and the tying up of existing schemes of the group in a maze of red-tape. Result:

Legal Caper

AST September, advocate Harish Jagtiani and chartered accountant Shamit Mazumdar filed a public interest petition in the Bombay High Court against L&T's Rs 820-crore public issue of convertible debentures. In November, the court dismissed the petition and stated that L&T did not belong to the Reliance group. The battle then moved to the Supreme Court. During the hearings, the Ambanis agreed to return the 7-per cent stake (39 lakh shares) it had acquired in L&T through BoB Fiscal's sale to Trishna Investments. At the time, the petitioners wanted the court to direct L&T to convene an extraordinary meeting of shareholders to decide whether the four nominees of Reliance should continue on L&T's board. Now that Lichas asked for such a meeting, the petition is likely to be withdrawn when the case comes up for hearing again on April 16. Incidentally, former additional solicitor general G. Ramaswamy who had argued on behalf of the Union of India is now Reliance's lawyer.

Reliance would become a spent force in a couple of years. The third option is the one which Lic has exercised in asking L&T shareholders to decide the fate of the Ambanis in the company.

There is an obvious element of risk involved in this strategy. Shareholders may vote for the Ambanis. But institutional sources feel that whatever be the outcome of the proxy war, the National Front Government is bound to win. If the first option had been exercised, all claims about an open government would have sounded hollow. The second option would have resulted in even more strident criticism about the Government's discriminating against a particular group. "The decision to ask L&T shareholders to vote for or against the Ambanis is risky but sensible," a senior official remarks.

Is the L&T affair only aimed at boosting the Government's image? In his budget speech, Dandavate had promised greater autonomy for financial institutions. Is this an empty promise? Says a retired institution chief: "The financial institutions have always been a pliable instrument of the ruling party. This will never change."

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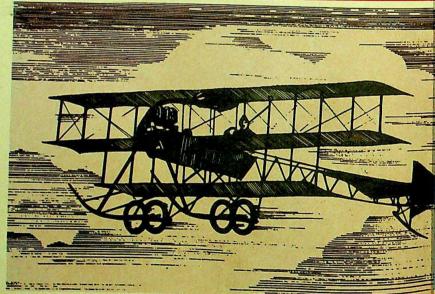
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The Proxy War

mad hunt is on to gain proxies—voting rights of shareholders—for the forthcoming Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of L&T which is scheduled to be held on or before May 17. With the Ambanis and the financial institutions said to have roughly an equal stake, the proxies could determine who finally controls the company.

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"I have no doubt that the Ambanis have far greater facilities than the financial institutions to gather proxies," says Ram Jethmalani, who argued the case against the Ambanis in the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, it is reliably learnt that the Ambanis have asked the L&T management to make preparations for the EGM where some 3,000 shareholders are expected to show up.

A question, however, remains. Where will the EGM be held? In 1985 and 1986, Reliance had conducted its shareholders' meetings outdoors at south Bombay's Cooperage stadium



and Cross Maidan. Then, after the Indian Express started its campaign against the group, it moved indoors and started conducting its meetings at Shanmukananda Hall. But the problem is that the Shanmukananda Hall was destroyed in a fire last month and there are no other halls in Bombay which can accommodate the numbers expected to attend the EGM. In other words, the Ambanis will again have to move outdoors. The fight is now in the open and no wonder that after years of off-therecord briefings, the Ambanis are once again holding press conferences. Paul had attempted to take over Escorts, the institutions (allegedly acting at the behest of the then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee) had wanted to remove nine non-executive directors from the company's board though the position of Chairman H.P. Nanda and his sons were not threatened. Reliance officials see parallels between the Escorts and L&T cases. Escorts Chairman Nanda, however, says this is true up to a point. "In our case they didn't touch the management. But can Dhirubhai say that as chairman of L&T, he is not part of the company's management?" he asks.

The role of the financial institutions in corporate take-overs has never been clearly enunciated. This ambiguity ensures that business tycoons like Dhirubhai Ambani with legendary connections can take over the management of a company with few questions being asked. The Ambanis, who have subverted the political system with impunity in the past, today sound hypocritical when the same system is being used to try and oust them from L&T. What institutions need is a code of conduct and a clear set of guidelines from the Government. The L&T imbroglio clearly provides an ideal opportunity.

-S.N. VASUKI with bureau reports





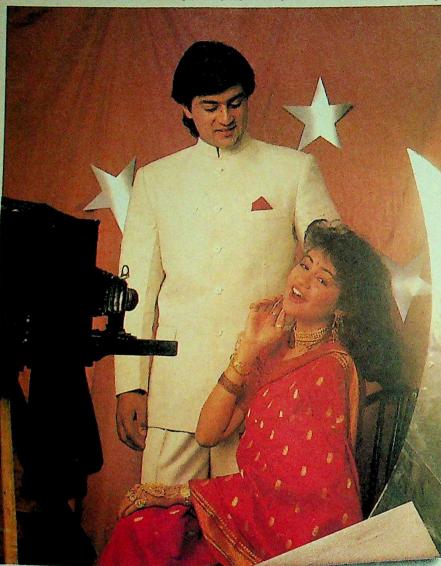
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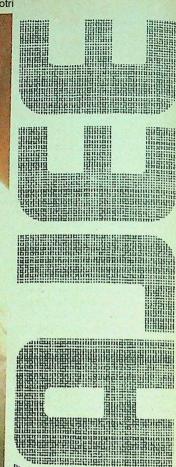
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SAM PITRODA

Czar under Siege

Serious allegations against C-DoT chief

OR over five years. Satyen (Sam)
Pitroda was the undisputed czar of
Indian telecom. A Rajiv Gandhi
favourite, he came to India with a mission: to develop the first indigenous
digital exchange for the country.

But now with allegations of major financial irregularities, of using the Centre for the Development of Telematics (C-DoT) to enhance the business interests of his companies in the US, of arbitrary recruitment of favourites to crucial posts, and of giving false progress reports about C-DoT, Mr Telecom is entangled in a

C-DoT is seen by many telecom officials as Unnikrishnan's effort to get at Pitroda himself. It's the price Pitroda is paying for being close to the Rajiv government.

There's no doubt that Unnikrishnan is gunning for Sam. Especially after he could not place the Nambiar Committee report in Parliament. Says a senior telecom official: "The irony is that the report has to be examined by the Ministry of Communications before being placed in Parliament, that is the government procedure. But how can Unnikrishnan allow Pitroda as secretary of the department to examine a report

Pitroda defends his position in most cases. Even if Pitroda's companies did not make money in the deals struck between two of his family-run companies, Martek and Micro Technology Inc, and C-DoT, there is no denying that he flouted government rules in his eagerness to import equipment and get the project going. The service rules clearly prohibit a government servant from awarding contracts to his own companies.

The financial irregularities have, however, diverted attention from the primary reason for which the Nambiar Committee was set up—to assess the working of C-DoT. Ironically, while the report has given a clean chit to the financial working of the organisation by stating that there is no "malafide in the puchases made by C-DoT." it has criticised C-DoT for not being able to start commercial production of the 40,000-line exchange by 1987 as was promised



bitter struggle for survival.

Last fortnight, the Government sacked G.B. Meemansi, executive director of C-DoT, and D.R. Mahajan, director, C-DoT, both of whom were close to Pitroda. The marching orders came close on the heels of the controversial report of the Nambiar Committee set up three months ago to look into C-DoT's working. Nine of the 13 members in the committee signed the report, while four, including Meemansi and Mahajan, submitted a dissenting report.

Theissue is increasingly turning into a personality clash between Pitroda, chairman of the Telecom Commission and of C-DoT's governing council, and K.P. Unnikrishnan, minister for communications. In the process, the question of C-DoT's performance has taken a back seat. Work in the Ministry of Communications has nearly come to a standstill with more than 700 files awaiting clearance by the minister.

The sacking of two top officals in

which is against him?" Instead, Unnikrishnan has ordered a probe into C-DoT's finances.

Sources close to Unnikrishnan argue that the removal of the two officers was essential as it was feared that they would stall the investigation. They point out that many of the officials in C-DoT had been hand-picked by Meemansi and Mahajan and so would not go against them. Unnikrishnan's options are limited. Insiders point out that unlike other secretaries in the Government, Pitrodais not bound by the service rules and so cannot be removed. This is because he was appointed as Telecom Commission chairman by a cabinet resolution. And the terms and conditions of his appointment are not available in the governmentfiles. So the only way to get at him is to file a chargesheet. The Law Ministry has been asked for advice.

Yet the allegations of financial irregularities could well turn the battle in Unnikrishnan's favour (see box) though

in the cabinet note in 1984. The note had further stated that C-DoT would develop an exchange with a capacity of 800,000 busy-hour call attempts—which is the number of calls an exchange can handle during a peak hour.

The Nambiar report points out that far from achieving its goals, C-DoT has to start work afresh in order to design the large electronic switching system. And even the 5,000-line exchange won't be ready for commercial production before 1992-93. The delay of more than two and a half years to develop the exchange has already cost Indian Telephone Industries(ITI), which was to manufacture the exchange, a revenue loss of a whopping Rs 150 crore.

Meemansi does not deny that C-DoT has fallen behind schedule. He says that one has to set high targets to motivate people. Pitroda, however, says he had only promised to begin field trials by 1987 with the ultimate goal of commercial production—a fact which, he

claims, has been misintepreted.

Nevertheless, Pitroda's promises seem to have been over-ambitious. Even the dissent report admits that commercial production of the 40,000-line exchange will not start before late 1992-93. A far cry from Pitroda's own assertion that C-DoT is merely five months behind in undertaking commercial production of the exchange (see INDIA TODAY, Janu-

What is more, the dissent report admits that the organisation has still not developed many crucial components for the large exchange. For instance C-DoT has still not started work on developing both the central modulewhich connects different exchanges to one another-and the inputoutput processor which stores billing information in the computer.

Moreover, C-DoT has progressively reduced the specifications for busyhour call attempts from 2.8 lakh in 1986 to 1.8 lakh today-which is much lower than the specifications laid down in the cabinet note. The C-DoT explanation: the country does not require such an exchange today.

Members of the committee also point their fingers at the failure of C-DoT's much publicised EPABXS. The society had licensed more than 36 manufacturers to produce the instrument even though it was not a part of its mandate. Says a member of the Nambiar Committee: "Many of the C-DoT manufacturers are working well below capacity. The C-DoT system does not even have features like call-waiting or call-hold for the consumer."

C-DoT has been hauled up on other counts too. Detractors point out that it has appointed as many as 11 foreign consultants, many of them close friends of Pitroda, to help in developing software. For instance, Roy

Mehta, a close friend of Pitroda in the US. has been paid Rs 41.64 lakh as consultancy fee for developing the crucial software for the digital switching system which is nearly half of the total of Rs 1.29 crore paid to foreign firms and individuals by the organisation for consultancy. C-DoT officials reply that they always had the flexibility to appoint consultants for their work.

Other charges include the fact that

despite its attack on foreign imports, the Telecom Commission has not taken any action against French giant Alcatel even though the company refused to upgrade the technology it supplied 'free of cost' as was specified in an agreement with ITI in 1982. More importantly, C-DoT signed an agreement with the US-based Trans Tech for the development of cellular phones even though Pitroda had openly criticised the project earlier as elitist. The

tag: \$ 2.4 million (Rs4 crore).

Typically; Pitroda is not taking all this lying down. As part of a plan to mobilise public opinion, a 300-strong delegation of C-DoT engineers marched to the prime minister's house last fortnight armed with a memorandum asking the Government not to harass people in the organisation. In Bangalore, C-DoT officials staged a mass walk-out from a meeting addressed by Unnikrishnan. Also on the cards are plans for mass resignations.

What is more, in a terse letter written on April 2, 1990 to A.S. Wakhle, member (services) of the Telecom Commission, who had issued the letter of dismissal, Meemansi has categorically stated that "I will not relinquish and hand over charge" as the "appointing authority for the executive director is the governing council". He has since threatened to quit as Telecom Commission member and return his Padmashree if "things did not improve".

Late last fortnight, Pitroda also asked for an appointment with Prime Minister V.P. Singh as part of his efforts to drum up support from Ajit Singh, the BJP and Jyoti Basu to fight the battle on the political front. Clearly. it is politics rather than technological competence that will decide was whether Pitroda really Mr Telecom or merely Sam the Sham.

-SURAJEET DAS GUPTA'



ALLEGATIONS

Martek Inc. a US company owned by Pitroda's family. shipped computer hardware and software worth \$114,675 (around Rs 18 lakh) to C-DoT.

Pitroda was authorised by C-DoT to sign cheques on behalf of the society in Chicago in violation of the laws of the land.

Martek also received an order to sell integrated circuits worth \$66,141 (Rs 10 lakh) to Indian Telephone Industries (ITI).

Micro Technology Incyet another Pitroda family concern-supplied C-DoT hybrid circuits worth \$100,000 (around Rs 16 lakh) but a wrong figure was disclosed to Parliament.

The premises of Martek were used as C-DoT's office and its employees were paid by the US company.

ET&T ordered personal computer networks and software from Martek for 26 licensed manufacturers of C-DoT EPABXs costing \$436,131 (Rs 69 lakh).

REPLY

Martek was able to procure computer hardware at cheaper price. Also no other company was ready to give the source-code of the software.

This was done to expedite purchases in the US by C-DoT. There is no reason to suspect a senior official like Pitroda. Also, it was only a temporary measure.

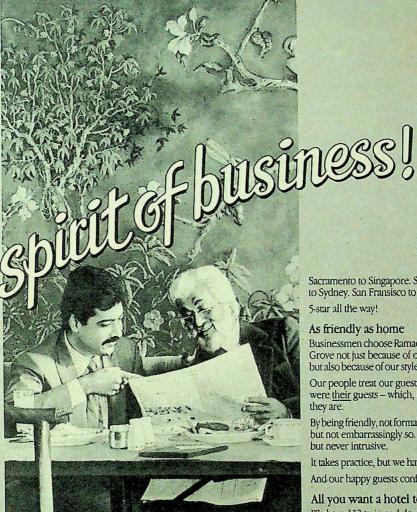
We are not even aware of this.

One voucher was inadvertently misplaced for which C-DoT's former executive director G.B. Meemansi is willing to apologise.

C-DoT was not registered in the US. So its employees were paid as if they were Martek employees avoid legal formalities.

No response.

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V. KRISHNAMURTHY

Under Scrutiny

SAIL chairman falls foul of Steel Ministry

E is the doyen of the public sector. No less than 21 chief executives of state-owned concerns have at some time or the other worked under him. But today, Venkataraman Krishnamurthy, 65, the country's bestknown technocrat and chairman of the Rs 7,500-crore Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL), is under attack.

And not just because he was close to Rajiy Gandhi. The man who has been credited with having vastly improved the performance of this state-owned behemoth with 2.5 lakh employees now finds that his entire approach towards developing the steel industry is being questioned by the Government.

At the heart of the debate is SAIL'S



Krishnamurthy: approach questioned

decision to award the contract for modernising India's oldest steel plant at Burnpur to a foreign consortium led by Japan's Nippon Steel. One of Dinesh Goswami's first decisions as steel minister was to have the modernisation contract reviewed by a private consultancy firm headed by M.N. Dastur.

The Japanese had suggested that the entire Burnpur plant be junked and that a brand new 2.15 million tonne plant be built in its place over a period of six years. The cost: Rs 6,900 crore, including Rs 1.900 crore in foreign exchange. The Dastur report, on the other hand, argues that some of the Burnpur plant's

BIIU PATNAIK

Grand Plans

RISSA Chief Minister Biju Patnaik has a dream. The erstwhile ace pilot wants to set up a huge three million tonne, export-oriented steel plant without a paisa of financial assistance from the Central Government-something unprecedented. And he has already sounded out a leading South Korean steel producer, Pohang, to become a major partner in this venture.

Has Patnaik broken protocol by writing directly to a foreign company? "Hang your pro-tocol," he exclaims. But won't New Delhi have to change its policy to allow such a project to come up? "That's just a formality," he says, claiming the Centre has reacted favourably to his idea.

Though negotiations

Patnaik: setting many a precedent

with the Koreans are at a preliminary stage, if Patnaik manages to pull off the coup, he would have set many a precedent. For he wants the foreign collaborators to raise the project's entire hard currency requirements and also be responsible for exporting its output.

Last fortnight, a team of Pohang executives looked at different sites near Paradip where the plant could be located. It has to be near a port not only since it is export-oriented but also because it will have to import coking coal from Australia.

Can India actually hope to export such quantities of steel? "What is three or four million tonnes out of a total world production of 600 million tonnes? If we can't think of stepping up exports, how do we deal with the country's balance of payments defiicit?" he asks.

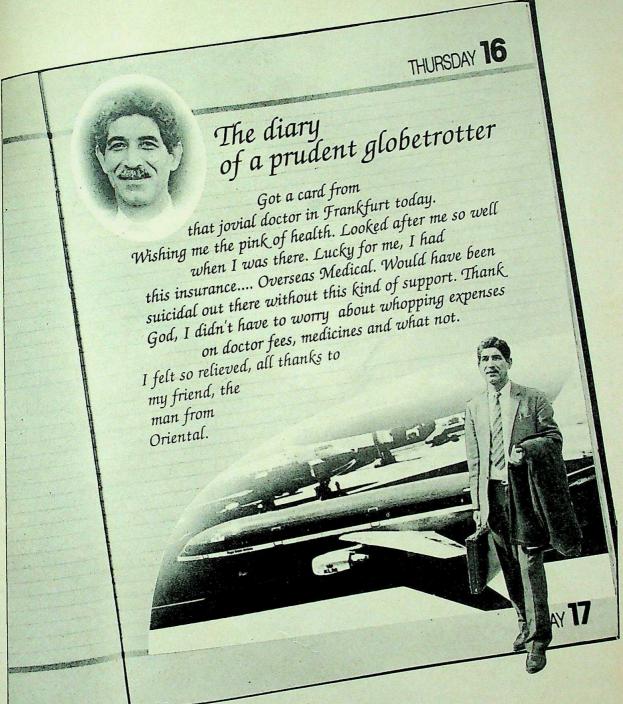
Will this project meet a fate similar to that of the Vizag steel plant which was supposed to be completed nearly a decade ago at a cost of around Rs 3,000 crore but will instead be ready only towards the end of 1991 after over Rs 7,500 crore has been

spent on it? "I agree Vizag is in a mess," says Patnaik who served as steel minister during the Janata regime. "That is because the right amounts of money were not spent at the right time. But this will not be repeated."

Still, it will take at least a year for the formalities to be completed. Only then will Patnaik's brave idea come a step closer to reality.

> -PARANIOY GUHA THAKURTA





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antiquated facilities (two blast furnaces) can and should be salvaged. This report envisages a marginally lower capacity (1.95 million tonnes) but the cost is down by Rs 2,000 crore, the foreign exchange outflow reduced by Rs 950 crore and the period of completion shortened by a year.

Further, the Japanese were paid a whopping Rs 60 crore just to prepare a detailed project report. "It would have cost one-tenth the amount if it had been done in India," claims a senior official. Krishnamurthy refuses to comment on the subject, saying: "I haven't seen the Dastur report." But he clearly favours the turnkey approach since "in the past, SAIL has suffered by implementing projects in a disaggregated manner."

A Steel Ministry bureaucrat differs: "A turnkey approach, which is invariably accompanied by tied credit from foreign sources, is injurious to the health of the industry for it seeks to downgrade indigenous technology and steel equipment-making capacities built up over years." Whatever be the merits of such arguments, the charge that costs have been artificially inflated dogs SAIL in the case of the Rourkela modernisation programme as well.

In October last year, the Government approved SAIL's proposal to award the Rourkela contract to three West German firms. The hard currency component of the package was Rs 276 crore. But when the Germans submitted their quotation in January, the figure inexplicably jumped to Rs 1,795 crore. Why? Krishnamurthy says the question is hypothetical since the contract is yet to be finalised.

That's not all. The Steel and Mines Ministry claims to have unearthed a "series of procedurial deviations" in SAIL's contract to buy coking coal from Australia. Last July, the Government approved a contract allowing the import of one million tonnes of coal valued at around Rs 120 crore each year for three years. After the new Government came to power, it received at least two well-documented representationsfrom Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal and BJP MP Jaswant Singh-alleging irregularities. An inter-ministerial inquiry committee was set up which submitted its report in February.

While the committee stated the contract had not resulted in any financial loss to SAIL, it pointed out major departures in tendering procedures from SAIL's own purchase manual. Moreover, the deviations were not justified in writing but made on oral orders. Then, the ministry asked SAIL to furnish a chartered accountant's certificate stating that there were no "hidden" discounts in the coal import deal. This certificate has not yet been submitted. In reply, Krishnamurthy says "certain details don't come up to the level of the chairman" and asserts that "no one in the company has personally gained".

SAIL's boss claims that the allegations against him are "rubbish" and drawn up by "drain-inspectors". His aides argue that he is today being criticised because he "did not allow bureaucrats and ministers to come anywhere near Ispat Bhavan (SAIL's headquarters)." Krishnamurthy himself feels the most important issue affecting the wellbeing of the public sector is the relationship between corporations and their administrative ministries. "Autonomy together with accountability is the answer," says he.

But the bureaucracy seems determined to gun for him.

"Under the umbrella PRODUCTION OF SALEABLE STEEL 200 (million tonnes) 7.06 100 0 90 189 188 Year ending March '87 85 1984

of autonomy, some public sector czars don't want any of their actions to be questioned," says a senior official. That the present rulers are not favourably inclined towards Krishnamurthy was evident when, late last month, he was removed from the post of chairman, Maruti Udyog.

Still, the bureaucracy's attempts to prick his larger-than-life image may not succeed as it is unlikely that any charges will personally stick to him. "Are they filing an FIR against me?" he asks mockingly, his exterior unruffled.

And Krishnamurthy-whose five-

year tenure as chairman of one of India's largest organisations ends on May 17is not to be taken lightly. The veteran war-horse has found a new mentor in Orissa Chief Minister Biju Patnaik who has drawn up grandiose plans to set up a giant steel plant in the state and wants him to head the new organisation, which is to be christened Kalinga Steel (see box).

Over the last four decades or so. innumerable awards and citations have been heaped on Krishnamurthy in India and abroad. Even Krishnamurthy's ardent critics admit he is a brilliant manager of human resources even if he is said to be somewhat intolerant of dissent. As for SAIL's recent performance, officials concede that after a turnaround, last

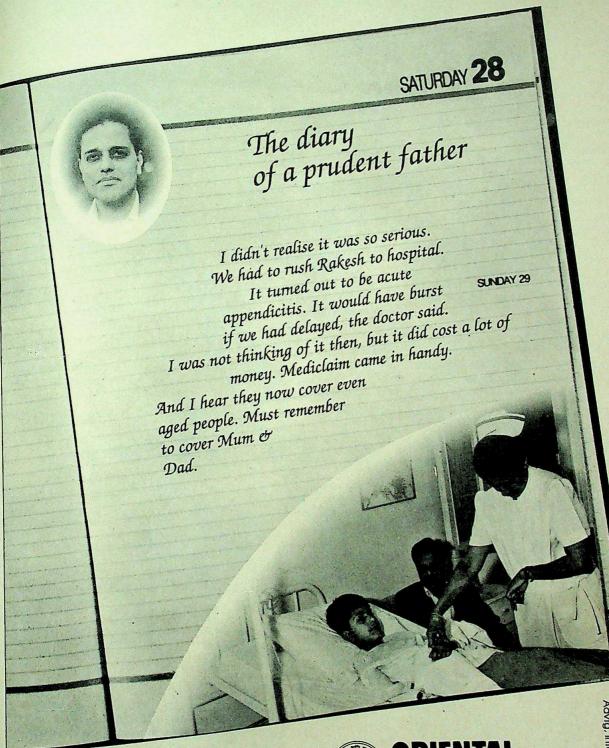
Chart by B.K. SHARMA

*SAIL: SLOWING DOWN AFTER A TURNAROUND (Rs. crore) * Excluding 115CO year's slowdown in production has been largely on account of extraneous factors like erratic supplies of coal and power.

Even if the Government fails to pin specific charges against Krishnamurthy—as is likely—one thing seems clear. Ministry mandarins are quite keen on changing the steel policy enunciated by him. Turnkey contracts for steel projects involving foreign collaborators will be done away with, that is, unless hard currency can be earned as in the case of Patnaik's proposal. This strategy, it is believed, will conserve foreign exchange. But it carries with it an attendant risk of projects getting delayed.

In any case, having straddled the steel scene in the country like a colossus. Krishnamurthy's legacy will hang over SAIL a long while after he leaves his post next month, perhaps earlier.

-PARANJOY GUHA THAKURTA



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THE MARKETS

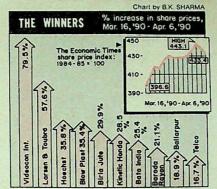
New Peaks

Political turmoil has no effect

ENSITIVE and stubborn. The two attributes can certainly coexist. At least in India's capital markets. In the past, share indices have reacted in a volatile manner to changes in the political sphere. In fact, scrip values have sometimes shot up or slumped merely on the basis of rumours; in other words, they have been over-sensitive to even a slight whiff of political turmoil. But last fortnight, it was a different story altogether. The markets refused to heed significant national developments which, at one stage, even threatened the stability of the V.P. Singh Government.

Thus, Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal wanted to quit, Kashmir continued to boil and the Government couldn't initially muster support in Parliament to extend President's Rule in Punjab. What was the impact of these developments on share prices? Nothing. The markets remained stubbornly bullish.

And significantly, on April 4, the 30scrip sensitive index of the Bombay Stock



Exchange (BSE) crossed the magic 800 mark to touch an all-time peak of 805.6. Similarly, the BSE's 100-scrip national index rose to 431.61 from its earlier peak of 425.47 and The Economic Times all-India index inched up to 443.1 from its previous high of 442.9.

Which was indeed quite an achievement. For it took place less than three weeks after the March 19 announcement of the Union budget proposals which were not perceived to be in favour of the corporate sector. The 1985 budget is often remembered as the one budget which really boosted the country's stock-markets. But at that time, it took more than two months for share indices to hit peak levels. This time around the situation appeared different.

The markets just refused to be cowed down. Even the removal of the biggest of the big bulls, M.J. Pherwani, from the chairmanship of the Unit Trust of India (UTI) and his replacement by bristling bear S.A. Dave seemed to have little or no impact on market sentiment. That is, until after April 4, when Dave got his act together. The next three days witnessed a concerted selling effort by uti ostensibly to stabilise the market and weaken the influence of rampaging bulls.

Bull-bashing is not the only apprehension brokers have about the new UTI boss. As the erstwhile head of the Securities and Exchange Board of India, Dave's arguments in favour of stricter regulation of stock exchange activities had not exactly endeared him to the broker community. If his past utterances are anything to go by, Dave wants stockmarkets to be less akin to gambling dens. He would rather they reflect more effectively the forces of demand and supply. And presumably he will use uti's awesome clout towards such ends.

With summer about to set in, the markets seem to be in no mood to turn sluggish. But one can never say for sure when they'll stop being stubborn and turn sensitive all over again.

ACTIVE STOCKS

Ex-dividend

RS 866

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Associated Cement 443.00	325.00	420.00	43.50 +
Asian Paints 255.00		225.00	6.25 -
Atlas Copco48.00	33.00	33.00	4.00 -
Bajaj Auto	355.00	427.50	35.00 +
Baroda Rayon910.00	617.50	847.50	125.00 +
Bata India	62.50	81.50	4.50 +
Ballarpur 161.00	120.00	148.00	14.00 +
Birla Jute 72 00	50.50	69.50	9.50 +
blow Plast 57 50	34.50	48.75	4.75 +
bombay Dyeing 231 0	173 00	203.00	16.00 +
oritannia Ind. 1190	97.00	114.00	1.00 -
brooke Bond 118 0	91 00	116.00	2.00 +
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		49.75	1.25 +
		171.25	13.75 -
		122.50	4.00 +
		271.25	20.00 +
		1250.00	30.00 +
Cadbury India 172.5	0 133.75	153.00	7.00 -
Hindustan Lever	0 101.00	113.00	3.00 -
Hindustan Motors31.3	0 19.80	26.00	3.00 +
ICI India Ltd. 49.5	0 35.25	40.00	4.00 -
Indian Organic 58.7	5 47.00	49.50	
Indian Rayon	0 84.00	105.00	10.00 +
uividend			

	1990			55	
	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE 6.4.90	Chan	
Indrol		161.26	205.00		
Ingersoll-Rand	245.00	190.00	230.00	5.00	
ITC		48.75	63.75	2.00	
J.K. Synthetics		50.00	60.00	6.00	
Kinetic Engineering		130.00	150.00		
Kirloskar Cummins		65.00	79.00	3.50	
KSB Pumps		190.00	225.00		
Larsen & Toubro		57.00	93.00		
Lipton		83.00	93.00		
LML Ltd.		15.00	17.50	0.50	
Madura Coats		100.50	115.50	9.00	
Mahindra & Mahine		67.50	82.50	6.25	
Milk Food		190.00	205.00		-
Motor Industries		785.00	860.00	nil	
Mukand Ltd	157.00	127.00	131.00	3.00	
National Organic			1280.00	20.00	
Nirlon		14.00	17.00	0.50	
Orkay Silk Mills		14.50	15.50	0.25	
Peico Electronics		24.00	29.50	1.25	
Pfizer		72.50	77.50	2.50	
Premier Auto		53.50	60.00		
Ranbaxy	110.00	86.25	97.50		
Raymond	87.50	70.00			
Reliance Industries		50.00			
Siemens India		96.00			
Shaw Wallace		65.00	000000000	STATE OF THE PARTY OF	
Shriram Fibres	71.00	51.25			
SKF Bearings					
SPIC		50.75			
Tata Steel		103.25			
Telco		110.00	133.00		
Vam Organic		132.50			
Videocon Int			197.50	52.5	0 -
Voltas	78.50	63.00	76.5	0 6.5	0
Wimco	32.50	16.7	19.0	0 1.2	5

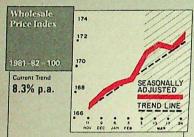
WORLD VALUE OF RUPEE

COUNTRY	CURRENCY	UNIT	F.	F
Australia	Dollar	1	13.2946	13.1458
Austria	Shilling	.100	144.0190	143.4169
Bahrain	Dinar	1	46.2161	45.1386
Bangladesh	Taka	.100	52.6779	51.9778
Canada	Dollar	1	14.8471	14.6880
Denmark	Kroner	1	2.6766	2.6478
Egypt	Pound	1	6.7175	6.5972
France	Franc	1	3.0912	3.0120
Hong Kong	Dollar	1,	2.2216	2.1985
Indonesia	Rupiah	100	0.9602	0.9451
Iran				25.2559
Italy	Lira	100	1.3909	1.3744
Japan	Yen	100	11.1607	10.8814
Kenya				0.7790
Kuwait	Dinar	1	59.1502	57.1755
Malaysia	Dollar	1	6.3523	6.2846
Mauritius	Rupee	1	1.1790	1.1629
Nepal	Rupee	1	0.6049	0.5966
	Guilder			8.9922
Pakistan	Rupee	1	0.8175	0.8087
	Dollar			9.1466
No description of the Party of	Peseta			0.1581
	Rupee			0.4288
	Kroner			2.7988
	Franc			
	Shilling			
	Baht			
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Control of the Contro	Dollar		A STATE OF THE PARTY OF THE PAR	
	Dirham			
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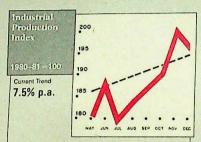
These rates were supplied by The Bank of Tokyo Limited, New Delhi and quoted between the banks on 6.4.90.

The major disappointment this fortnight was the industrial downturn. After indicating some buoyancy over the last quarter-last month showed a negative growth rate once again. The Government needs to boost industrial confidence and growth immediately before recessionary conditions settle in. On the positive side, prices were stationary. But this may be only because the budget is taking some time to make its impact felt.

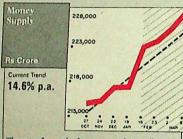
All data are seasonally adjusted. Current trends are computed on the basis of six months' (weekly data) or one-and-a-half years' (monthly data) figures.



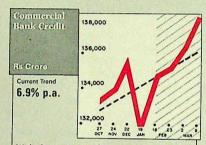
Prices remained more or less stable over the last fortnight but the impact of the budget is yet to be recorded in full.



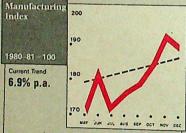
It was a disappointing month for the industrial sector-the index of industrial production fell by 2 per cent.

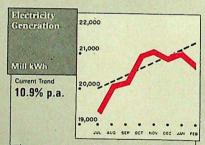


The rate of growth of money supply is well under control which means that inflationary pressures are being held down.

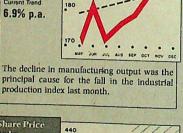


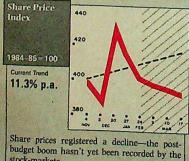
With the quantum of commercial bank credit increasing only marginally, credit conditions remained very tight.

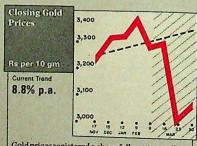




There was a marginal decline in the generation of electric power indicating that stagnation is here to stay.







Gold prices registered a sharp fall—principally in response to the scrapping of the Gold Control Act announced in the budget.

WHOLESALE PRICES

Growth of items in the 2nd fortnight of March 1990

Pola

ı		
	%	Growth
	Onions	19.54
	Eggs	12.13
ı	Masoor	10.36
I	Linseed	9.58
Į	Linseed Oil	9.57
ı	Fish	9.43
	Mustard Oilcake	9.06
	Pete Crude & Natural Gas	7.25
	Copra	6.23
	Rape & Mustard Seeds	6.16
	Mustard Oil	5.14
	Tapioca	4.94
	Turmeric	4 65
	Coconut Oil	4.45
	Jute Textiles	3 91
	Arhar	3 90
	Silk & Artificial Fabrics	3 53
	Coffee	
	Barley	
	Groundnut Seeds	2 74
	Gram.	
	Groundnut Oil	
	Handloom & Powerloom Products	2.43
	Chillies	
	Cotton Seeds	
	Vanaspati	
	Milk	
	Jowar	
	Tobacco Raw	
	Maida	
	Ragi	
	Rubber	
	Groundnut Oilcake	
	Dry Cells	
	Cocham and	1.26
	Cashew-nut	1.23
	Synthetic Fibres	1.23
	Khandsari	1.23
	Radio & TV	1.19
	Logs Timber Bamboo	1.15
	Betel-nuts	1.13
	Phosphatic Fertilisers	1.12
	Tea	1.08
	Cotton Yarn	1.01
	Polythene Moulding Powder	0.98
	Nitrogenous Fertilisers	0.97
	Wheat	0.88
	Tractors	0.76

Of the 137 series considered, 75 of them with a total weight of 57.105 had a positive growth and 59 of them with a total weight of 27.747 had a negative growth.

SELECTED INDICATORS

	Letters of intent issued	1989
	Numbers, February159	108
The special section in	Licences issued	
1000	Number, February 63	37
No.	Fertilisers	
	Thousand Tonnes, Pebruary	688.7
	Electricity Generated	
i	Mill kWh. February 19765	18681
	Revenue Earning Traffic	
	Mill Tonnes, February	25.23

Compiled by THE POLICY GROUP

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Polar Fan Scientist's breakthrough leaves other fans in the past!





wth 9.54 2.13 0.36

9.58 9.57 9.43 9.06 7.25 5.23 3.16 5.14 1.94 1.65 1.45 3.91 3.90 3.53 3.45 2.88 .74 2.55 .49 .47 .39 .27 .12 .03 .97 .96 .49 48 .26 .26 .23 .23 .23 .19 .15 .13 12 .08 .01 .98 .97 .88 .76

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89

37

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81

23 OUP Designed, created and practically invented by the Polar Fan Scientist.

Can the Polar Fan Scientist honestly claim to have reinvented the ceiling fan? Take a look at the Aavishkar 1990 range of ceiling fans and judge for yourself. The Polar Fan Scientist has outdated every other fan motor. With a new motor that would put a hurricane to shame.

He's designed the blades with perfect balance. For the best breeze ever. He's put stylish touches to every Polar Fan. Sophistication that would add. class to any environment. You have an exquisite blend of colour shades to choose from -Royal Beige, Silky Green, Twin-Tone, Snow White, Deluxe Brown

All of this plus the Polar distinction of double ball bearings and 7 years' guarantee in every Polar Ceiling Fan.

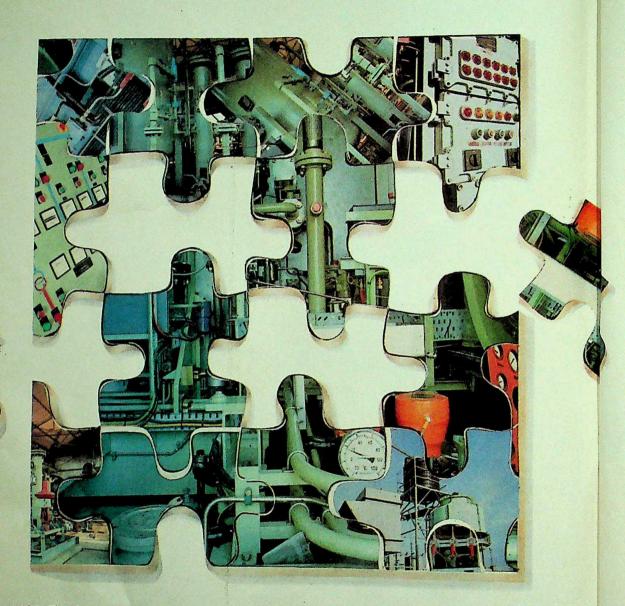
A sum total of meticulous scientific detailing. The Aavishkar 1990 range. A range of ceiling fans of the future.

The better sense fans that push all other fans into the shadows of the past.



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making. For ONGC with HAL Bangalore and GMODC, USA.

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TURBINE REGENERATORS

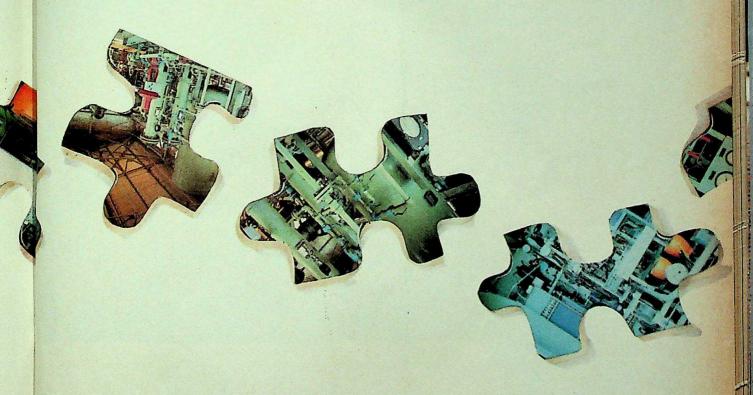
WASTE HEAT RECOVERY

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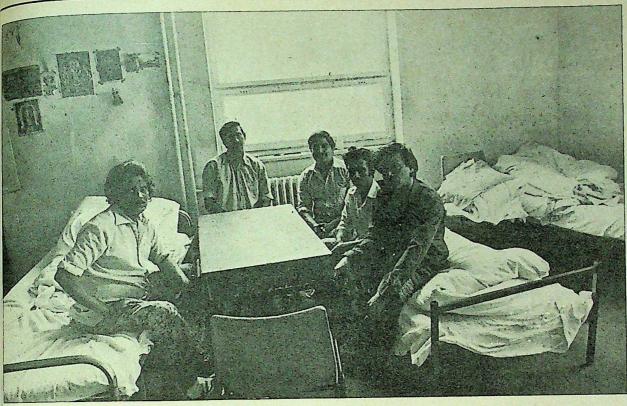
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ONE Indian in West Germany asks another: "How do you like West Germany?" "Well, it's nice except there are too many Germans!" replies the other Indian.

WEST GERMANY

Raising A Wall

Third World immigrants under attack

HIS oft-repeated joke no longer provokes laughter. For the scenario has become all too real. The influx of immigrants from East Germany and other East European countries to West Germany has unleashed a debate over the prudence of admitting such large numbers of immigrants and created a sense of fear among

West Germans, many of whom see their jobs, housing and other benefits threatened. What scares foreign workers, particularly those from India, who are basically valued for the skill they offer at wages much lower than those sought by the average West German, is that East German workers could be prepared to work for even less. In that case the employers would obviously prefer their own workers rather than immigrants.

Asylum-seekers in Berlin; and (right) Schonhuber

1:260.90

Most Indians work in semi-specialised

West Germany is peculiar in all of

jobs-as receptionists, salesmen, bank tellers. Already many tourist hotels and shops around the zoo, West Berlin's famous tourist trap, have begun to employ East Germans. The losers are mostly Asian immigrants.

Europe in terms of its immigration laws. Post-war Germany, in trying to erase the memories of the horrifying Nazi war crimes, created a constitution, Article 16 of which includes the right of every foreigner to

claim asylum in the country on grounds of political, religious or racist persecution. After a while a feeling was growing that many people were exploiting the law.

In recent years this has included thousands of Tamils and Sikhs seeking asylum on true or fictional grounds of persecution in India or Sri Lanka. So, immigration

> laws were tightened and visa requirements introduced for a number of countries, including India. Work permits are no longer being issued to asylumseekers during the first few years of their stay and the appeals long-winding against deportation are being shortened. Yet with some help from lawyers specialising in immigration affairs, many Indians have managed to beat the law. But the new competition and the changing German mood is something that even they may find too difficult to handle.

The competition from skilled, lowlypaid East German workers has come at a time when the anti-foreigner feeling is already running high among a sizeable section of West German society. While some are euphoric about the reunification prospects, others fear competition from easterners and the economic woes that the reunification may bring. Either way, it translates into hostility for foreign workers. Says an embittered Vijay Murthy, a Sri Lankan worker: "You see this hostility everywhere. When you go to the baker, the fruit-vendor or the barber.'

The foreign workers' position is further complicated as the popular German perception of outside workers is generally that they are asylum-seekers who want to misuse the country's law to their advantage. "How do you explain to the average German that I am not an asylum-seeker, that I am a law abiding citizen who pays her taxes?" questions Saraswathi Gundappa, a south Indian nurse, who has worked for 15 years in a hospital.

Spearheading the campaign against the immigrants is the right wing Republican Party; led by 66-year-old Franz Schonhuber, claiming that they are "only protecting German interests".



Identity cards for immigrants

Officially, the West German Government maintains that immigrants' fears are exaggerated. "Recent polls show the right-wingers do not command more than 2 per cent support. That is much less than

in most European countries. There is no cause for such worries," says a spokesman for the West German Embassy in New Delhi. But for the 21,000 Indians in West Germany, what matters is not the statistics but the writing on the rapidly crumbling wall. -MANIK MEHTA in Bonn

EAST GERMANY

No to Aliens

"AUSLANDER Raus!" Foreigners out. The writing on the wall is clear. As East Europe's free elections were held with resounding cries for quick German reunification, haunting clouds of uncertainty and fear enveloped foreigners living on both sides of what was the Wall.

In East Germany, democracy has brought in its wake racialism too. Today one can frequently hear vicious racial jokes, especially against the Vietnamese and the Africans. Inside the city trains it is commonplace to hear insulting remarks like "foreigners stink". "Some of my foreign friends say they feel scared to walk in the streets in the night. There have been instances of fisticuffs between foreigners and East Germans, " says 23-yearold Leonore, an East Berliner studying at the prestigious Humboldt University.

Fear of physical assault and indignities apart, there is an acute anxiety about the shape of things to come amongst the 11,000-odd foreign students from various Third World and

socialist countries currently in East Germany. More are sponsored by the Solidarity Committee or the East German Government. At Humboldt University, students from African, Asian and Latin American countries sit in clusters in the cafetaria anxiously debating about their future. "Will I continue to get my monthly stipend of 350 East Marks?" (three East Marks equal one DM), asks 25-year-old Rolly, an Indian student specialising in clinical psychology, summing up the mood of apprehension.

The same veil of insecurity hangs over the foreign contract workers in the country. Constantino, a Mozambican worker in a meat factory in East Berlin-among the 85,000 odd foreign workers in the country-speaks with the anguish of being humiliated: "Recently when I was taking a train to Karl Marx Stadt, a group of local youngsters came up to me and threateningly asked where I was going. The moment I uttered Karl Marx Stadt, they said there are enough blacks in that town, why don't you go home?"

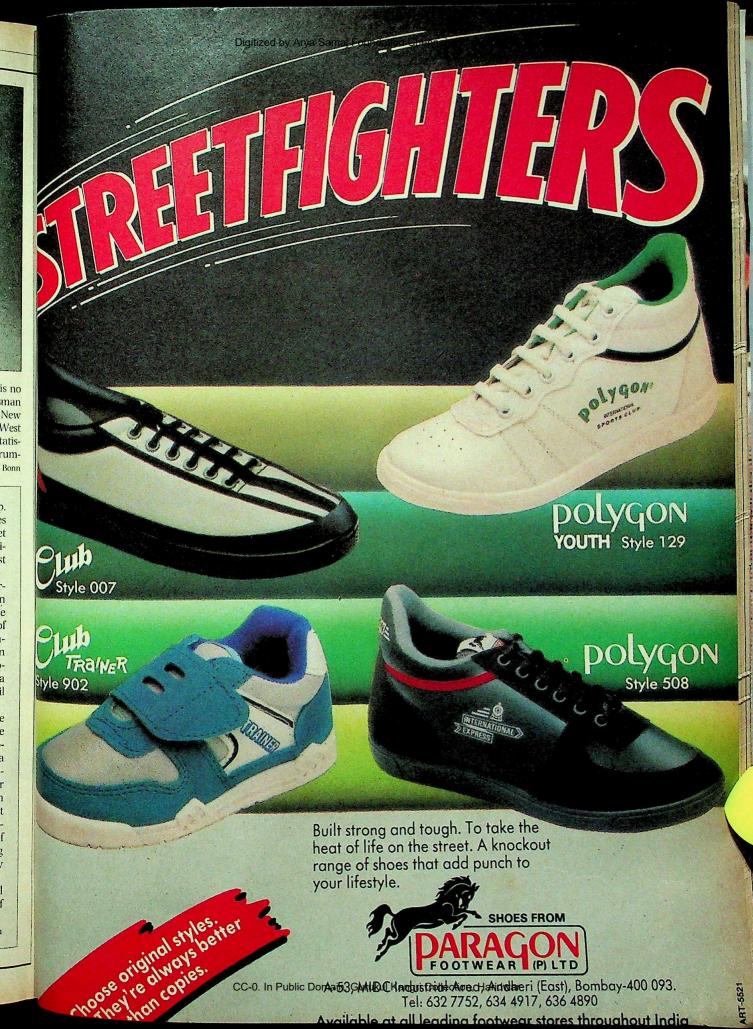
The rising xenophobia brought the foreigners together. "Everything is changing-rules, regulations, currency, social system. The future is a big question mark. Foreigners are the most vulnerable group. Unless we start asserting ourselves and demanding our rights, we will get left behind," says Mahesh Jha, president of the Indian Association in East Germany.

Jha, who works for the Hindi service of the state-controlled radio in East Berlin, is also a spokesman for the working group for the Council of Foreigners Associations, a conglomerate of 60-odd foreigners' groups in East Germany who have come together with the hope of forming a powerful pressure group. The council is about to become a registered body.

One of the tangible successes of the associations was persuading the Round Table of government and opposition parties which served as a caretaker government before the elections to set up a Commission for Foreigners. Recently, the commission ruled that a few Vietnamese contract workers, who were sought to be forcibly shifted to another job with a cut of 400 East Marks under threat of being deported, could not be peremptorily sent back.

But the commission might well prove inequal to stemming the tide of rising German chauvinism.

-- PATRALEKHA-CHATTERJEE in East Berlin



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Sedd supporte

HE scenario is unnervingly familiar. _ There's a book and there's a murmur of protest at hurt religious sentiment. This time, the book is a seven-volume French comic-strip version of the Koran—of which three volumes have been published—written to popu-larise the holy book among children. The author: Yusuf Seddik, 47, a Tunisian-born scholar. So far, the protest is muted but it's being heard from Egypt to London.

Though there has been none of the bluster that marked the anti-Rushdie furore, the dissent is hard to ignore. Surprisingly, this time it isn't

Iran that's leading the condemnation, but Kuwait, Tunisia and Morocco.

The key issue is whether the tales of the Koran can be presented pictorially. While Shia Iran is said to take a more liberal view, the rest of the Sunni Arab world consider characters in the Koran as God-images. In France, the Arab Institute was reportedly forced to discontinue selling the book. And in Britain, plans to bring out an Englishlanguage version have fuelled anger.

Already, Seddik's work has been attacked by two seats of Islamic learning—the universities of Medina in Saudi

Arabia and Al Azhar in Egypt. In Tunisia, police stopped a press conference called by Seddik to defend himself. In Kuwait, he was compared to nationa Rushdie at a public meeting. And the League of East an Islamic Scholars of Morocco has instructed booksellers to boycott the , Pacifi book and urged the Govtercont ernment to take action. Like Rushdie, Seddik is not one to be cowed down. He ight we said his solicitors are taking the Islamic Council of tendant Tunisia to court for nes to f "lying" about his book. He told INDIA TODAY: we kn "They are prejudiced against my work. I think these are civil questions which must be addressed in a court of law.'

Seddik is not without supporters. Middle East KORAN COMICS

No Laughing Matter

Comic version of the holy book causes uproar



Lhough the protest against the Koran comics is still muted, it can spiral into a major controversy.

French Muslims discuss issue; children in mosque: divided opinion

as "clearly a serious book done in the style of Tintin". He said the book focuses on colourful tales rather than on the religious side. Saeed Essoulami, researcher on the Middle East with Article 19, an organisation campaigning for freedom of expression, says: "After consulting a number of Islamic scholars, Seddik withdrew the first 15,000 copies. The current edition avoids depicting the Prophet and the angels who visited him." The book, Muslims

researcher Adel Darwish

described Seddik's work

agree, doesn't pose the problems The Satanic Verses did: it insults nei-

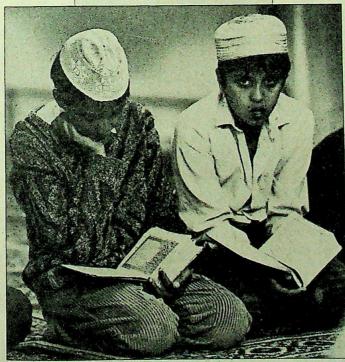
ther Islam nor the Prophet. But, they say, the comic-strip trivialises the Koran. Says Syed Pasha, general secretary of the Union of Muslim Organisations of the UK and Ireland: "To bring out the Koran in cartoon form is to trivialise it. Seddik should repent and go to Mecca."

While Pasha says he will appeal to Britain to ban the publication or the import of the book, he seems to have learned his lesson from the Rushdie affair, where protests fuelled sales. Says he: "We want it to die a natural death." More moderate is Dr Hashm El'esawy, director of the Islamic Society for the

> Promotion of Religious Tolerance. Says he: "I think the protests come from people with an excessive fear of idol-worship. You don't want your prophets up on walls."

Seddik is unwilling to compromise. Says he: "I am entirely against the attempts to mix civil matters with religious affairs. My effort is make religion an individual affair." And he is determined to fight. "Even if I go the Rushdie way," he declares, "I will not demand police protection. I have been a war reporter, I'm not afraid." Clearly, Seddik's breed of "the new Muslim intellectual" ready to battle the sword with the pen is here to stay.

> -DIPANKAR DE SARKAR in London



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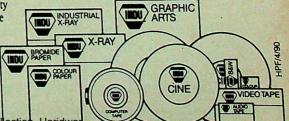
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Prime Plots for the **Powerful**

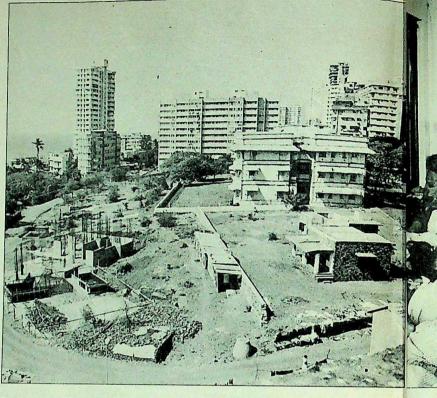
Series of land scams engulf **Pawar Government**

AHATMA Gandhi arranged for the plot of government land to be given to his biographer, D.G. Tendulkar. The renowned scholar built a small bungalow on the plot, and died there after completing the massive, multivolume biography of the Mahatma, Today, the land that Gandhi got for Tendulkar in Bombay is at the centre of a controversy over the brazen manner in which government-owned plots worth crores of rupees have been grabbed by politicians, bureaucrats and even judges. And engulfing Chief Minister Sharad Pawar's Government in yet another duststorm raised by deplorable land dealings.

Tendulkar's plot has an idyllic location-part of the government-owned Rocky Hill estate overlooking the Arabian Sea in the Malabar Hill area. On one side are apartment blocks providing official accommodation for ministers and judges. On the other half, the Mahatma's biographer built a small bungalow which he hoped would be utilised to further Gandhian ideals after his death. As a result, in 1974, the bungalow, along with the land, was given by the state Government on a 99-year lease to Bal Kalyani, a voluntary organisation devoted to the education and welfare of poor children. The lease was a nominal Re 1 a month.

Today, Bal Kalyani has more than 100 children on its rolls, and its students record a remarkably low drop-out rate after they enter municipal primary schools. Says Bal Kalyani chairperson Sushila Adivarekar, a former MP: "We were hoping for government support to expand our activities to train pre-primary teachers for Bombay's slum children."

Instead, the Government unleashed the Mantralaya's land sharks onto the underprivileged children's centre. In a matter of months, bureaucrats led by Rural Development Secretary V. Ranganathan managed to subdivide the Bal Kalyani land, and get Pawar to okay the lease of 3,725 square metres to the Angarki Cooperative Housing Society.



Pawar approved the proposal and the Government gave letter of intent before the society—which gave its address as 'Mantralaya'-was registered.

Everything was done surreptitiously, records were manipulated, and before anyone knew what's happening, building work started," says Bal Kalyani Vice-President and former MLA Chandrashekhar Prabhu. To ensure implementation of the project, promoters enrolled influen-

tial bureaucrats in the society (see box).

The building will be a great boon for the society's 26 members. At market prices, the land is worth around Rs 7 crore. But under government regulations, the bureaucrats have to pay just Rs 7 lakh for an annual lease, simply done by renting out part of the building to a bank, for which the much-coveted 'commercial user' permission is easily obtained (in Angarika's case, it was obtained even while a writ petition against the project was being heard in the high court). In such buildings on specially leased land, the flat area is restricted to 1,075 square ft. But the rule is cleverly circumvented by having extra-large balconies, allowing

beneficiaries of government largesse to idge obser own apartments worth nearly Rs 50 lakh. Ithe prop at a fraction of the market value.

However, last November, more than a year after Angarika was allotted the land, the Bombay High Court stayed work on the building, an order subsequently upheld by a division bench in February 1990. In the original order passed on the writ petition filed by Bal Kalyani and the Save Bombay Committee, Judge H.C. Pratap took the unusual step of listing nine statements made on behalf of the bureaucrats' society for special condemnation. These statements challenged the citizens' right to question the Government's allotment of land to its own

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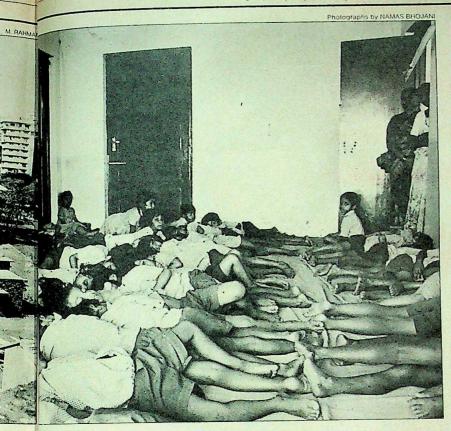
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Tendulkar's plot; children at Kalyani; and (left) Pawar: facing amiliar barrage of charges

reaucrats, describing it as "an internal rangement" of the administration, and en mocked at the concern Bal Kalyani esident Chaudhari-who was then out power—had for the poor. Observed the dge: "To those enjoined to uphold the ws and the Constitution without fear or your, affection or ill-will, the averments und rather unfortunate.'

In February, the division bench taded by Justice R.A. Jahagirdar pointed ut that in the Bal Kalyani case "larger sues of public policy regarding the disosal of vacant lands are involved". The gesse to dge observed that the "faith of the public olakh, the proper functioning of government" as at stake, and felt that if the petition gainst the bureaucrats' society was not dmitted, "other similarly highly placed ersons will be encouraged to covet the mited number of plots available in Bomay and the Government will be perladed to satisfy their demands". Rangaathan refused to comment on the case. dying that it was still sub-judice.

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Interestingly, Jahagirdar's strongly-^{orded} ruling came barely five days after newspaper highlighted another sensaonal story involving a housing cooperive on government land, this time inolving 28 venerable sitting or retired judges of the Bombay High Court and the Supreme Court (Though Jahagirdar is not a member of the judges' cooperativewhich has put up a 14-storey apartment block in the exclusive Backbay area-Justice H.C. Pratap, who gave the original ruling on the Angarika case is).

THE timing of the report on the extraordinary reduction in the lease rent granted to the judges' cooperative by Pawar's Government was widely seen as an attempt by the bureaucrats to twist the judiciary's arm. But the Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti (NHSS), an organisation fighting for housing rights for the poor, promptly seized the opportunity to file a petition against the judges' society. At the same time, the Maharashtra Police Housing Welfare Corporation (MPHWC) representing the lower ranks of the police force sought further judicial action in its petition against a massive politicians' cooperative housing society coming up on 20,000 square metres of prime government land in the picturesque Worli area. Ironically, one of the flat-owners in another controversial politicians' colony in the same area, the Worli Sagar Cooperative Housing Society, is Bal Kalyani's Adivarekar, dramatically highlighting the extent to which the distribution of public land to influential people permeates the state capital.

The proposal for the judges' Foreshore

TOP RANKING BENEFICIARIES

- Y.V. Chandrachud, former chief justice. Supreme Court.
- ► V.D. Tulzapurkar, retired judge, Supreme Court.
- ▶ V.S. Deshpande, retired chief justice, Bombay High Court.
- ►M.N. Chandurkar, retired
- chief justice, Madras High Court. ►M.H. Kania, judge, Supreme
- ▶P.B. Sawant, judge, Supreme Court.
- ►S.C. Pratap, judge, Bombay High Court.
- ►V.S. Kotwal, judge, Bombay High Court.
- ►Sharad Monohar, judge. Bombay High Court.
- ►H.H. Kantharia, judge. Bombay High Court.
- ►C.S. Dharmadhikari, retired judge, Bombay High Court.
- ► A.D. Tated, retired judge. Bombay High Court.
- ► Shivajirao Deshmukh, rural development minister.
- ▶ V. Ranganathan, secretary, rural development.
- ▶ V.K. Aggarwal, secretary, housing
- ► Satish Tripathi, secretary. urban development.
- ▶ Johny Joseph, secretary to the governor of Maharashtra.
- ▶ P. Subramaniam, secretary. environment.
- ▶P.A. Mane, chief executive officer, Alibag.
- ►S. Boronkar, IPS officer.
- ► M.L. Lakhanpal, 1As officer.
- ► Manmohan Singh, 1AS officer.
- ► Bhaskar Patil, IAS officer.
- ► Vasant Sathe, Congress(I) MP.
- N.K.P. Salve, Congress(I) MP.
- Shiyajirao Patil Nilangekar, former chief minister of Maharashtra.
- ▶ Babasaheb Bhosale, former chief minister.
- ► A.R. Antulay, former chief minister.
- ▶ Pratibha Patil, former MPCC(1) chief.
- ▶Prabha Rau, former MPCC(1) chief.
- ► Sudhakar Naik, state revenue minister.
- ▶ Jawaharlal Darda, former state minister.
- ▶R.S. Gavai, former chairman, Vidhan Parishad.
- ▶ Datta Meghe, former minister.
- ► Madhu Deolekar, former BIP MLC.
- ▶ Prem Kumar Sharma, BJP MLA.



CHANDRACHUD



S.R. DESHMUKH



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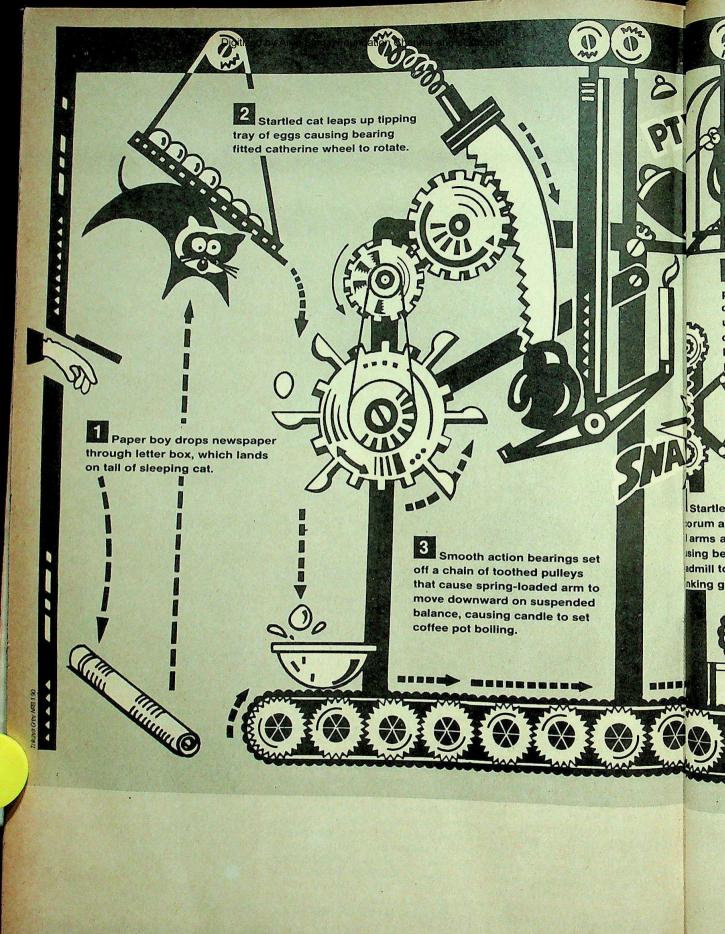


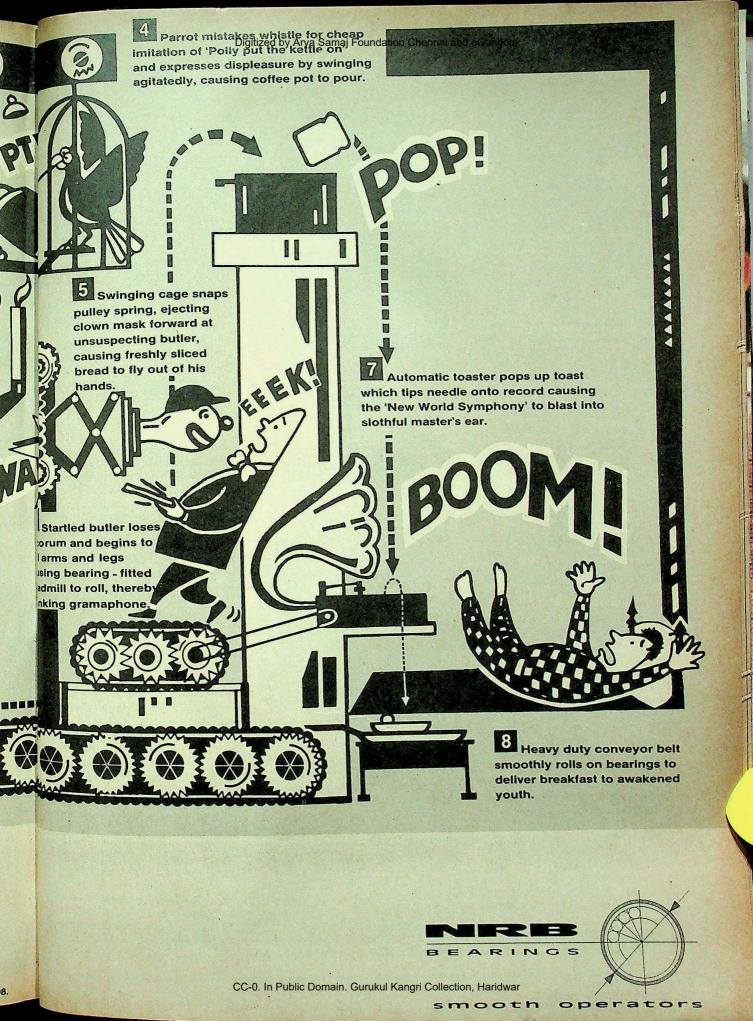
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Cooperative Housing Society was first mooted during Pawar's earlier reign as chief minister in 1980. Prime land, close to the fabulous Nariman Point and Cuffe Parade localities has been allocated to the judges. It is a kind of Golden Acres for officialdom: the area already has four multi-storey housing cooperatives benefiting top 1As and 1Ps officers, politicians and judges. Not long ago, another proposed cooperative in the area with Union Minister of State for Defence Production Raja Ramanna as its most prominent beneficiary, stirred up a hornet's nest.

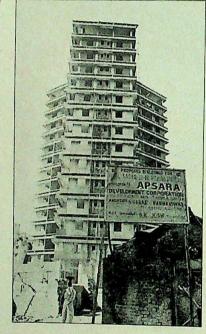
The NHSS has now challenged the judges' cooperative which has put up the grand, 14-storey Samta building across the road from where a slum once stood. The petition, which is slated for hearing in June, has alleged many irregularities:

- ▶ In January, after repeated pleas by the high court judges, the formula for the annual lease rent on the land, which could sell for as much as Rs 7 crore in the open market, was changed by Pawar's Government. This brought down the annual lease amount from nearly Rs 6.5 lakh to Rs 2.4 lakh.(The judges, in fact, had asked for more concessions).
- ▶ A 900-sq metre government plot which was on a monthly lease to a gymkhana was added to the land given to the judges' society under peculiar circumstances.
- ► Two serious violations of the city's rigid Floor Space Index (FSI) regulations, making part of the building illegal.
- ➤ Violation of the guideline for enrolling a fifth of its members from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. And part of land was reserved for housing the dishoused.

In a detailed response, the judges refuted most charges, and defended the reduction in lease rent as an act of parity with the neighbouring bureaucrats' societies. Justice A.D. Tated, secretary of the society, told the court: "The Government was within its rights to allot the land without inviting any public offers."

The entire case promises to become a tricky minefield for the judiciary. The NHSS petition could not be filed as is usual before a single judge, since several sitting judges are members of the housing society. Considering all the Maharashtra judicial luminaries in the society (see box), including former Supreme Court chief justice Y.V. Chandrachud, a plea could also be made that the petition is best heard in another state high court. "The independence and prestige of the judiciary are at the core of both the Constitution and the contempt of court law. The question which will have to be





The Judges' building (top); and MLAs' apartments: islands of influence

addressed is—do judges compromise the Constitution and commit contempt of their own court by forming a society and asking favours of the executive?" asked P.A. Sebastian, advocate for the NHSS.

The NHSS has also constituted an action committee to publicly take up four issues: the judges' society, the dereservations scandal, the arbitrary granting of state largesse and the slumdwellers' right to shelter. NHSS activists are particularly perturbed by the recent observation by a high court judge—during the hearing of another case—that the Government's regulari-

sation of Bombay's hutments was illegal. If this were to result in a ruling, it would render 12 lakh hutments housing 60 lakh people (more than half the city's population) illegal, even as the Government virtually gifts land to the elite.

Pawar's Government is still under attack for last year's dereservations scandal. Last fortnight, there was an opposition walk-out in the Assembly after Urban Development Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde tabled a report on the dereservations. Opposition MLAs vociferously protested about the fact that the report contained all facts except the most crucial one—the names of the beneficiaries of multi-crore plots reserved under the city's draft development plan for public use, but quietly released by the Government for development by private builders and others.

Ironically, while some judges of the Bombay High Court were preparing to shift into the spacious flats at Samta, a colleague, Justice M.L. Pendse, asked persons occupying public offices to be cautious before accepting grants of land from the Government. The judge's observations came in a case filed by the Maharashtra Police Housing Welfare Corporation (MPHMC) against the Shivchhatrapati Cooperative Housing Society, which is putting up six multistorey buildings at Worli exclusively for serving or former parliamentarians and legislators. The plots went to the politicians even though the 1983 government resolution under which land is allotted expressly gives priority to freedom fighters and retired or serving members of the armed forces and the state police. Instead, police barracks, a hospital and a welfare centre were threatened with demolition. Pendse stayed the demolition and further construction of the apartment blocks till the disposal of the MPHWC petition. However, the area already has several politicians' buildings put up by another society, Worli Sagar whose beneficiaries include former Union ministers, chief ministers and MPCC(I) chiefs (see box). Says Vinod Gupta, who heads the social service group Savdhan and lives in one of the MLAs' buildings: "Nearly 90 per cent of the members keep the flats locked up, or sell or rent them out at huge profits.'

Suddenly, the Government is faced with an array of court petitions challenging the arbitrary granting of land to the influential. What the courts now decide will to a large extent determine whether the Government will be forced to formulate a rigid framework for granting state largesse.

-M. RAHMAN

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ESCRIBED by its detractors as boring and monotonous, squash, the plain Jane cousin of glamour games like tennis and cricket has problems selling itself. Yet, after years of wandering around in the wilds, Indian squash may finally be receiving a much-needed charge. In the impressive shape of Pakistan's Jahangir Khan, the king of contemporary squash, who recently visited India.

For three intoxicating days, Khan, world number one and eight times winner of the British Open, was in the country to play a threematch Clash of Titans series. In a fine gesture, Khan agreed to play at the courts of Daly College, Indore-where his illustrious forebears grandfather Faizullah and father Roshan had played—to raise

money for a glass-back squash court. But before that, Bombay squash enthusiasts were in for a treat: two matches at the courts of the Cricket Club of India.

Pitted against Khan in the encounters was Australian Chris Dittmar. Currently ranked number three in the world, it was last year at the World Open semi-finals and the World Team Finals that Dittmar did the unbelievable: he beat Jahangir. While many watched this first game live on television, the lucky 200 or so who managed to procure tickets to the game



SQUASH

Court Craft

A shot in the arm for the game in India

were thoroughly absorbed.

Although the powerfully built Australian lost in straight games in all the matches and Khan reinforced his complete supremacy in every area of the game, the quality of squash was superb. And for the enthusiasts it was like a dream: amazing ball control at the tin, delectable drop shots, beautiful boasts, aggressive rallies and unbelievable retrievals in the back court.

While the games were free of tournament tension, with the British Open just a fortnight away both Dittmar and Khan are using every sparring opportunity to maximum benefit. Said a dejected Dittmar after the first match: "I was going flat out to win." Khan, too, was taking the encounters seriously. Says he: "Apart from playing a good game, the training input is very critical, and includes playing two-threehour sessions, workouts in the gym and jogging, and some swimming. It is getting harder to stay at the top. You need to be motivated and be disciplined.'

In the games that Khan and Dittmar played with national champion Adrian Ezra and ex-national champion Meherwan Daruwalla, the lack of these inputs on the part of the Indians was evident. Said Dittmar: "The Indian players have reached

the top in India, and will go no further here unless they are exposed to the best in the world." It is clear that a lot needs to be done if the sport is to improve in India. and reach the standards of countries like Pakistan, and the Far East.

Indian squash is still far from that, but with the amount of interest generated with the visit of Khan and Dittmar, more glass-back courts in the offing, and already improved performances at the Asian level, a beginning has been made.

-SHIV TANEJA

JAHANGIR KHAN

"I work hard"

Jahangir Khan spoke to Senior Correspondent shiv taneja, in an exclusive interview. Excerpts:

Q. How do you view the last 10 years for squash?

A. Standards have gone up tremendously. I find I am training at least 50 per cent more than when I started out.

Q. The year 1989 saw you lose your first game after a string of 500 wins.

A. I felt nothing. I

knew I was going to lose one day. My aim now is to win the British Open this year for the ninth time-then I'll hold all the records...

Q. You have been described as the most complete squash player ever.

A. Well, I work hard and am very

determined to win. And I think I am good for three more years.

O. How has squash developed in Asia in the last few years?

A. Very well in the Far East-Singapore Malaysia—but and sufficiently in countries like India and Pakistan.

Q. But Pakistan has produced champions?

A. In Pakistan we

have had great players in the past. Moreover, government and other sponsorship has been tremendous. Also, we have worked hard.

Q. How do you rate our players?

A. I feel sad they cannot make it to the top international levels. They have talent, but are not being trained correctly, and are not motivated enough.

O. What should be done to improve the situation?

A. They need a top class coach, who will push them hard. Also,

Q. How should the game be popularised in countries like India?

A. Constant exposure through television. Also there ought to be a law which does not permit any construction of any kind-commercial or residential-without the construction of squash courts. They do not take up too much space.





M. Sutton, G.P. Bhalla, Gulzara Singh, T.R. Joshi, K.L. Powell, Jarnail Singh, R. Gnanasekharan, Gopal Saini, Sabir Ali, Raj Kumar, Bahadur Prasad and several others.

Each one of these athletes wore the Railway colours with pride and served the nation with distinction.

All evoke nostalgic memories, reflect the indomitable will to win and inspire us to reach new pinnacles of glory.

largest in Asia, carrying 11 million passengers and nearly 10 lakh tonnes of freight over a distance four times to the moon each day. Higher productivity and greater public service are only a few of the milestones the Indian Railways are reaching.

The endeavour to excel continues unabated as the Indian Railways echo the sportspersons dream of 'Swifter! Higher!! Stronger!!!'

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INDIAN TENNIS

A Promising Future



ALL over the world and in any sport the need for injecting fresh, young blood in national teams at regular intervals is appreciated. Somehow it has not been the case

in India and particularly so with Indian lawn tennis. For decades we have been in the habit of depending on one player, or sometimes two.

Yet for us in India there was always the satisfaction that we had one or two players who continued to make news on international circuits though lately

there were fears that the situation could change. In that sense India's win over Japan in the Davis Cup tie at Chandigarh last fortnight was heartening. Especially so as it was achieved by a bunch of youngsters, who were up against a more experienced lot from Japan. I saw these boys at Chandigarh and spent some time talking to them.

The best thing about this bunch is that it is not just one or two or three but eight youngsters, all of them at almost the same level. It augurs very well for the future of Indian tennis. Maybe, Vasudevan, who put India in the driver's seat

by winning both his singles, is not exactly a youngster, at 28, but the others are in their teens or just out of them.

It was a bold step in the right direction to field a new and young team. Now at least the selectors know the players better-we now know how each of them will react in a difficult situation. It takes time and perseverance to build up a new team and I think we are on the way to achieving this.

After a dismal showing at Bharuch last year when we lost to South Koreawe meet them in the next round in Seoul in June-the Indian players who made

AITA VS AMRITRAJ

Rude Rally

NDIAN sport seems to move in alternating cycles of glory and gloom. Thus it was that last fortnight, soon after the new-look tennis team helped the country once again

hit the comeback trail with an unexpected 4-1 victory over Japan in the Asia-Oceania zone Group 1 of the Davis Cup, the All India Tennis Association (AITA) served two devastating aces. On the receiving end were Vijay Amritraj and P.L. Reddy, the former honorary secretary-general of the association.

A show cause notice to Amritraj has six charges, including organising a benefit match for former

Davis Cupper Premjit Lal without the AITA's permission. The association also raked up a 20-year old minor issue and charged Amritraj with endorsing a complaint of income tax deduction made by a US player Jim Macmanis who played here in 1970. Said Natwar Singh, president of the AITA: "We have to be firm or other players too will follow suit."

If Amritraj fails to reply to these charges, the AITA can ban him from playing in India and also request the International Tennis Federation to suspend him. But says Vijay: "I am not going to get involved in mudslinging."

If the charges against Vijay smack of vendetta-R.K. Khanna, honorary secretary-general of AITA, and Amritraj have been feuding since 1974some of the charges of financial bungling against Reddy seem to deserve scrutiny.

A perusal of the accounts shows



Amritraj and Khanna: volleying charges

that Reddy has at worst been careless about the bills. The major charges against him relate to the spending of \$15,000 drawn by him during the Davis Cup match against Australia in 1987 and \$10,000 drawn during the match against Sweden in January 1988. Says the auditors' report: "No details of the expenses involved nor any vouchers have been shown to us." The report also points out that no sanction was obtained under FERA for certain payments to players.

Reddy has furnished accounts to

the AITA, but all without bills and not enough to convince Khanna, himself a chartered accountant. Says Khanna: "There's been no proper accounting."

Reddy and the former honorary treasurer Anil Jauhar do not recognise the appointment of either of these auditors nor of Ramesh Desai as honorary treasurer. "The auditors can only be appointed by the annual gen-

eral meeting," asserts Jauhar. Declares Reddy: 'The allegations of financial irregularity are false." He adds: "Let Khanna explain on whose money he goes to Wimbledon.'

In the process, the simmering Madras versus Calcutta feud seems to have resurfaced. Ramesh Krishnan's pulling out of the match against Japan, can be viewed in this context. Unexpectedly, the Calcutta duo of Zeeshan Ali and Leander Paes delivered.

The ongoing fracas augurs ill for Indian tennis. Embroiled in the muck rake, the AITA will find little time to prepare the team for the next Davis Cup round, nor to draw up plans to groom youngsters as the Amritraj family has done through the Brittania Amritraj Tennis (BAT) scheme-both Rohit Raipal and Paes are BAT products. Moreover, with Reddy planning to sue for libel and Amritraj already in court claiming dues from the AITA, Indian tennis is set for some bitter, hard court battles. -BINOO K. JOHN



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their debut then had to prove a point. That obviously motivated them to produce something extra.

The desire to do well and overcome previous failures is an imporant ingredient in the growth of a player. That came to the fore in Chandigarh, where Zeeshan Ali in the absence of Ramesh had to shoulder a lot of responsibility. Not only that, he was on court all three days and he came out with flying colours at the crucial and difficult junctures.

While he was tentative and hesitant last year, resulting in a loss to South Korea at Bharuch, this time he had a positive approach. He served and volleyed confidently. But his net play is erratic and can be improved a ot. He has certainly grown a great deal in the last year or so as a player.

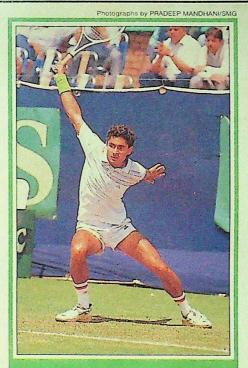
Vasudevan, for long believed to ack confidence in himself, dealt a severe blow to Japan's fancied number one Shuzo Matsuoka. The doubles turned out to be a marathon affair but Zeeshan Ali and debutant eander Paes came out trumps with a marathon fifth set ending 18-16 to clinch the crucial third point for India in the tie.

A word about Paes. The 16-yearold comes from a sporting familythe father, Vece is well known in hockey circles and mother, Jennifer. is a basketball international—and he is an exciting tennis prospect. He is athletic, energetic and moves very quickly on the court. He likes to volley and gets up in the air very well to smash high balls.

These are his plus points. But there is also a drawback—he is not very sound on his ground strokes. But with age on his side, he can develop that and become a very good player if his coaches work carefully on these weaknesses. Leander cannot afford to lose any time, for he is 16, and almost middle-aged in this era of Boris Beckers and Jennifer Capriatis.

This matters a lot in modern tennis as much of it is played on artificial surfaces which make serveand-volley outdated, and there is a lot of emphasis on ground strokes. Almost all top players like Ivan Lendl, Stefan Edberg and others hit heavy ground strokes. Even the most aggressive forecourt player has to have asound defence which will stand him in good stead in times of crisis.

I am not despondent about the future of Indian tennis and hope comes from youngsters of the kind who did us proud at Chandigarh.



ZEESHAN ALI

Hope for the future of Indian tennis comes from the likes of Ali and Paes who did us proud at Chandigarh



This is a very good bunch of juniors.

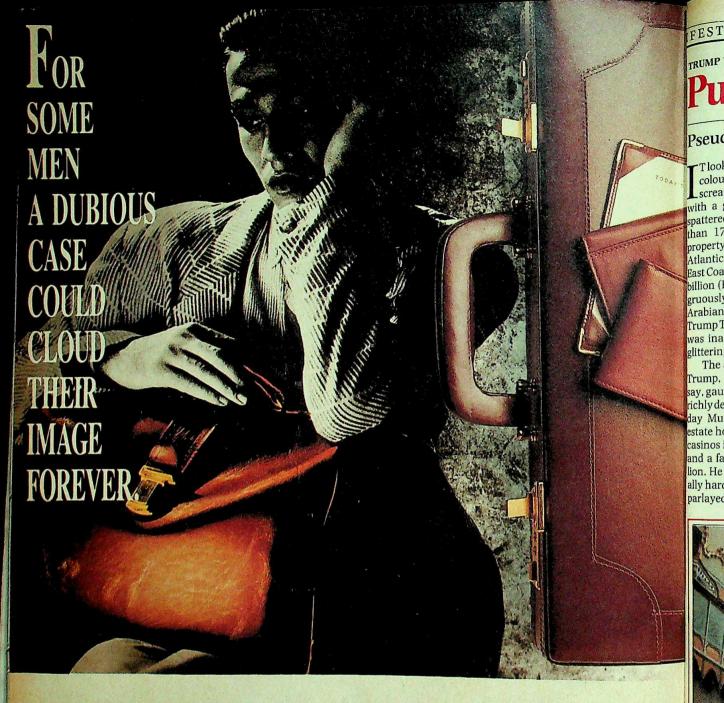
These youngsters from time to time can be asked to play in a roundrobin tournament with eight players maybe even in camps conducted by the All India Tennis Association. They must play through the week from Monday to Sunday for seven consecutive days. Each player should meet everyone else. Such a practice schedule will also toughen them so they could last out successive matches as in international tournaments where players have to be on court everyday and sometimes even twice in a day, what with the vagaries of weather and tight international schedules.

Good incentives for such tournaments could attract the players. Of course, this has to be supplemented with frequent match play abroad in tournaments where they can see and play against the top stars.

Of the things which the modern player-in India especially-has to make sure of is his or her concentration. A man like Sunil Gavaskar-I am not a keen follower of cricket-is an ideal model for any youngster in any sport. He could bat for two whole days in a row and as a result get lots of runs and centuries.

A major difference between the tennis of the '60s and even the '70s and that of now is that playing surfaces have changed and players these days tend to be specialists in one surface or the other. In the '50s there used to be Lew Hoad and in the '60s Rod Laver, who were truly all-court players. Look at Pat Cash, for example. In 1987 he won the Wimbledon on grass, but he had lost in the first round in French clay courts and then again in the first round on the synthetic courts in the U.S. Open. Imagine Laver or Hoad going out in the first round of a Grand Slam. It was nearly impossible. They were able to show their class on all surfaces.

The other change in modern tennis is in the relationship among players. Previously two players would fight a tough five-setter on the court and then go back to the club and have a drink and chat together. This is not to say that the competition was any less fierce. Today players do not nurture such friendship. So we have to take aberrations like the show of gamesmanship in the crucial doubles tie at Chandigarh in our stride. But times have changed and so has tennis and only those who change with the times can hope to stay close to the top.



BUT SOME MEN CARE. ABOUT

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Pure Mughalomania

Pseudo-Indian casino opens in Atlantic City

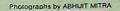
Tlooks like something out of a child's colouring book-oriental domes in screaming pinks, blues and purples with a generous supply of gold paint spattered everywhere. It straddles more than 17 acres of choice ocean-front property on the glitzy boardwalk of Atlantic City—the mecca for America's East Coast gamblers—and cost a cool \$1 billion (Rs 1,700 crore) to build. Incongruously, this garish translation of an Arabian Night fantasy has been named Trump Taj Mahal Casino and Resort and was inaugurated last fortnight with a glittering ball.

The author of this fantasy is Donald Trump, 44, the flamboyant and, some say, gaudy New York billionaire. Trump richly deserves the sobriquet of a modern day Mughal, what with his vast real estate holdings, ownership of two other casinos in Atlantic City, his own airline and a fabulous yacht worth \$100 million. He is also known as an exceptionally hard-headed businessman who has parlayed his intuition for good deals into an estimated worth of \$5 billion.

Nothing Trump has done so far, however, matches the immensity of the Trump Taj Mahal Casino, claimed to be the largest in the world. Statistics: 1,20,000 sq ft of gambling space, 3,000 slot machines, \$14 million worth of crystal chandeliers, \$4 million for employee uniforms (some purportedly oriental), 1,250 guest rooms renting from \$250 a day for "commoners" to \$10,000 to spend a night in Alexander the Great Suite (with a steam room, sauna, kitchen, bar and servants).

The new casino resort is the biggest oasis amidst the squalor that the rest of Atlantic City is. Inside, the hundreds of metal,

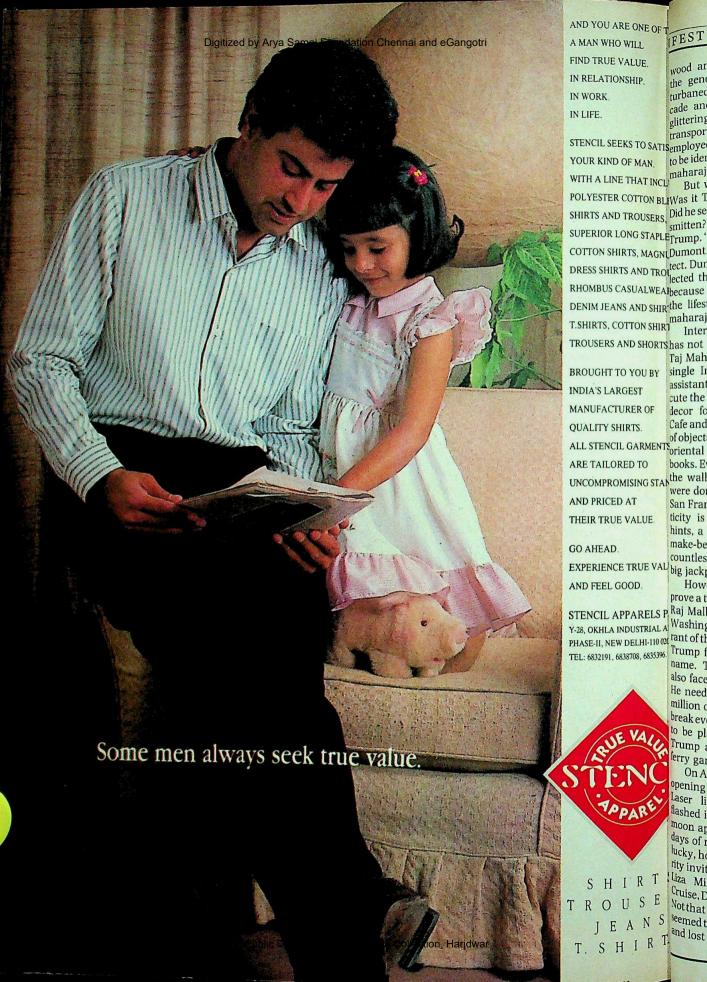
Waitress dressed like a houri; and the entrance to the casino: garish fantasy







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wood and stone elephants, the generous sprinkling of turbaned men in gold brocade and svelte women in glittering pink are meant to transport you as a Trump TO SATISemployee, who did not want to be identified, put it, "to the maharajah land of India''.

But why the Taj Mahal? TTON BLIWas it Trump's inspiration? ROUSERS, Did he see the real Taj and get smitten? "Yes, I did," says G STAPLETrump. "No," says Francis X. S, MAGNIDumont, the casino's archi-AND TROUECTE. Dumont says Trump selected the Taj Mahal theme UALWEAThecause of its connection to AND SHIR the lifestyles of the "fabled maharajas".

Interestingly, Dumont SHORTShas not only never seen the Taj Mahal but did not use a single Indian, either as an YOU BY assistant or adviser. To exe-

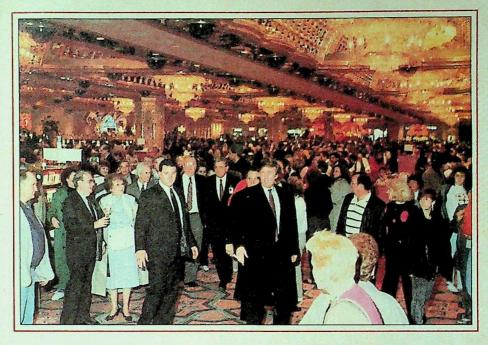
cute the Mughalesque marble fountain, decor for restaurants called Bombay Cafe and New Delhi Deli, and thousands of objects and motifs with unmistakable ARMENTS oriental flavours, Dumont merely used books. Even the Kangra-style murals on the walls of the ornate Sultan's Feast were done by a non-Indian artist from San Francisco. The question of authenticity is shrugged aside. As Dumont hints, a casino's livelihood depends on make-believe—the stuff that makes countless gamblers dream of hitting the RUE VAL big jackpot.

However, the name Taj Mahal may prove a thorn in Trump's side, thanks to ARELS P Raj Mallick, an Indian restaurateur of USTRIAL A Washington D.C., who owns a restaurant of the same name. Mallick has sued 708, 6835396. Trump for \$200 million for using the name. Trump's billion dollar gamble also faces some other snags.

He needs a revenue of \$1.2 million or more a day just to break even. The tycoon is said to be planning to press his

Trump airline into massive service to lerry gamblers from big cities.

On April 5, Trump held a spectacular opening to declare the casino open. laser lights and brilliant fireworks lashed in the evening sky, and even a moon appeared as if on cue after seven days of rainy weather. Trump was less lucky, however, with a long list of celebtity invitees who did not show up—like liza Minelli, Michael Jackson, Tom Cruise, Don Johnson and Michael Tyson. Not that it mattered to the huge mob that seemed to outnumber the invited guests, and lost \$1.8 million in the casino. The





Donald Trump (centre) at the opening; and the Sultan's Feast: billion dollar gamble

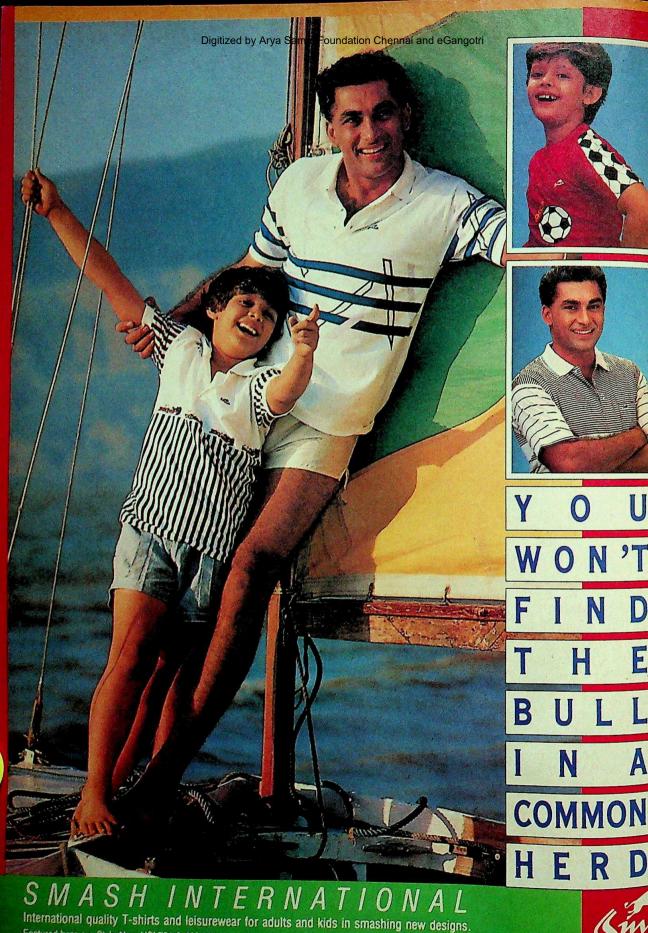
> opening day crowds devoured, among other things, 30,000 shrimps, 16,000 oysters, 955 pounds of prime beef, 650 pounds of lamb chops, 50 giant salmon fish and 2,000 bottles of champagne. Said Karen Tuso, public relations officer: "More than 2,000 press people had turned up, making it statistically the most publicised social event in history."

> Mery Griffin, a retired TV personality, excited the crowd's curiosity as to which of his two women Trump would bring to the opening: his estranged wife, Ivana, or his mistress, Marla Maples. "We're all here today to see who Donald's going to

bring," said Griffin to the crowd's roar. In the event neither of the two turned up. Said a scribe: "Donald's real mistress is the Taj Mahal.'

While most of the sober newspapers poked gentle fun about the fantasy land, sensational tabloids like the Post screamed: "That shack in India just can't compete." Perhaps that is just as well for the real Taj. Trump's many admirers-like the elderly woman who jostled her way into the casino to touch him, declaring it may bring her good luck-believe that the Taj Mahal will be his biggest triumph. Others just hope that, like the real thing, it does not turn out to be a mausoleum where a Mughal's dreams were buried.

-AMRIT KAKARIA in New York



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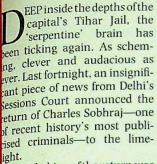
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The fashion of the return was ypically Sobhraj, even if it was o daring jail escape, murder or ank robbery. This time it was hrough a plot that was more in he nature of a machiavellian ntrigue to exploit the tedious, ong-winding procedures of Inlian law; a plot that had Charles obhraj written all over it.

"David Hall turns approver," aid the news item, referring to obhraj's well-known accomlice who had helped him make is sensational escape from Thar Jail on March 16, 1986. Hall, a well-known British drugeddlar, who'd come in contact vith 'Charlie'—as Sobhraj is alled by his associates—in lihar in 1985 where he was

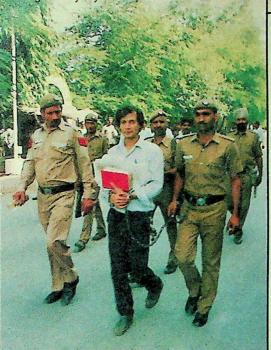
ailed under the Narcotics Act before he was let off on bail, is one of the main conspirators in the jail break case.

Arrested along with Sobhraj in Goa and charged with procuring 1,000 Larpose tablets which were crushed and mixed in sweets and custard to drug the ail staff, Hall has given the case an unexpected turn by deciding to turn

In his application to Additional Sessions Judge H.R. Malhotra on March 26, Hall stated: "I am overburdened with guilt. I would like to give my complete and true statement with regard to all the lacts and circumstances concerning the case which are in my personal knowledge. In return I may be pardoned."

Nobody quite belives that Hall, decribed by the police and jail staff as being under Sobhraj's spell', was siezed by a sudden and overwhelming attack of lemorse. "It is not pardon alone that he's ooking for," says an associate, adding, the application is Sobhraj's brainwork. He is scared of dying."

The argument carries weight, for Sobhraj-faced with the prospect of being extradited to Thailand where the iring squad awaits him—has much to gain from this move. Under Thailand's aws anyone charged with criminal of ences should be punished within 20



CHARLES SOBHRAJ

A Rogue's Ruse

Crucial accomplice turns approver



years of committing the crime. Sobhrai's efforts, therefore, are to stay on in India till 1995 after which the extradition case against him will be automatically nullified.

Lawyers are unanimous in their view that such an application would further complicate and prolong the case. If the public prosecutor agrees to have Hall turn approver, there are many among the 20 accused in the case who will then file an appeal against Hall's confessional statement. Says Rajendra Sethia, charged with financing the jail break: "I will contest his statement as being unreliable. Why should we be tried on the basis of information provided by someone who is implicated in the same case?"

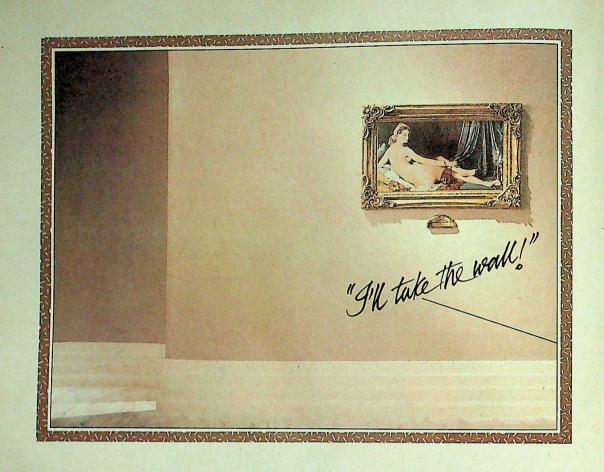
Hall's application is particularly intriguing as he has little to gain by turning approver. Served with a 10-year imprisonment sentence in the narcotics case, Hall has six more years to go. Even if the Government did decide to pardon him, he will still have to spend a further two and a half years in jail. Under the law,

remission on a 10-year sentence is three and a half years. Says Rajan Bakshi, Hall's lawyer: "Hall is hoping to get remission. His application came within one week of his appeal against the 10year sentence being turned down by the high court."

Other messages are also being read into the timing of Hall's application which 'coincided' with the date of the last hearing of charges against Sethia. Sources reveal that Sobhraj and Hall sent messages to Sethia asking him to cough up around Rs 2 lakh. Sethia denies the charge vehemently but those familiar with Sobhraj's ways view the application as a blackmail tactic to further implicate Sethia.

The police, elated over Hall's new stand, seem only too keen to have him turn approver. Hall's confessions will only strengthen their case. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Crime, Amodh Kanth, who has been closely associated with the case and with Hall-whom he spent long hours interrogating-describes Hall as a creative, sensitive person and very attached to his wife whom he hopes to join soon. But if, as most suspect, it is really Sobhraj who is behind the latest development, it may yet be a long wait.

-HARINDER BAWEJA





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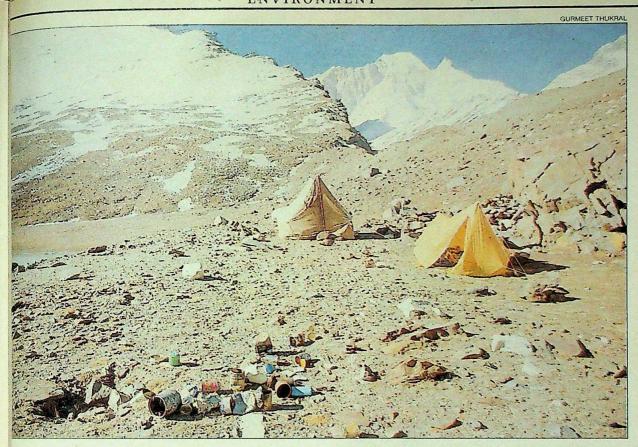
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Response 9012



OFTLY, a boot sinks into the snow. The calf follows, then the high. Each step is a marahon effort. But exhausion passed a few hundred eet below. Intoxication prevails now. For the air is

are, the vast sky a deep clear blue. The flect is not just physically exhilarating, t is in the realm of the spiritual.

Or so it has been to thousands of mountaineers. But may not be so in the luture. For as the numbers of enthusiasic young climbers grow, so does their litter. Food cans, oil cannisters, ropes, bilet paper, cigarette packets, chocolate wrappers are all left behind on the slopes. Intil a decade or two ago, it was a telatively minor problem. Today, it's ome to a point where the supposedly nighty Himalayas are in urgent need of protection.

At an international conference on nvironmental protection of the Himaayas in Delhi last fortnight, mountainters Edmund Hillary, M.S. Kohli, and invironment Minister Maneka Gandhi, among others, focused attention on the cological degradation of the region. andhi even proposed a Rs 300-crore lan to green the lower Himalayas.

The mushrooming business of adenture tourism is largely responsible

on

THE HIMALAYAS

Soiled Splendour

Littering by climbers poses serious threat

for this state of malaise. When Tenzing Norgay and Hillary first scaled the Everest in 1953, there were no more than a dozen expeditions a year to the Himalavas and not even a hundred trekkers. Today there are 300 expeditions and over one lakh trekkers-most of them first-timers from the NCC or the Youth Hostels Associations who know little about the mountain habitat or its care. And more keep coming. Colonel B. Kumar, former commandant of the High Altitude Warfare School, who runs a lucrative adventure travel business. estimates that customers are increasing at the rate of about 50 per cent per annum. There are now 45 adventure clubs in Bombay alone and new ones keep mushrooming all over the country.

The volume of their litter is incredible. Last September, an Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) expedition burnt a tonne of garbage on the bank of the Shafat glacier at a height of 4,400 m above sea level. What couldn't be burnt filled six huge gunny sacks, which were A camp at Vasuki Tal. littered with garbage

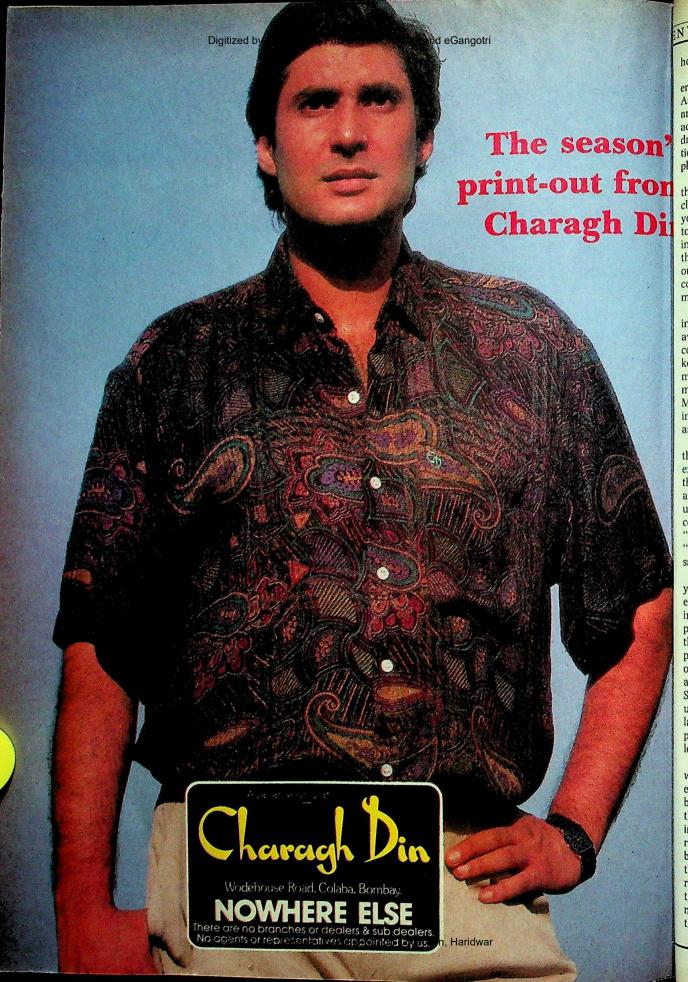
brought back to Srinagar for disposal. The spot is the traditional base camp for the twin Nun Kun peaks. Three or four expeditions

climb the peaks every year and most return with less than half of what they took up.

The Nun Kun trail is among the worst littered, though perhaps not as badly as the Tapovan area around the Gangotri. The Nanda Devi ring used to be a badly abused climbing area until it was declared a sanctuary and closed to all climbers.

Mountaineers tell other horror stories-and not just about such welldocumented disasters as the Valley of Flowers. Sanjiv Saith, a climber, recalls that while climbing as liaison officer with a foreign group some years ago, he came to a meadow littered with beer bottles, salami packets and cans. A German group had passed that way the previous day. Says Saith: "Obviously there had been a binge."

But Germans are generally conscientious. The worst are Indians, Says Commander Joginder Singh, Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) secretary: "We Indians will clean our own



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The army is among the worst offenders in places like Ladakh. Avid climber Ashish Chandola says that while camps are spruced to a shine, ugly dumps often accumulate around them. "And in the dry rarefied air of Ladakh, decomposition can take 10 times longer than in the plains," he adds.

Realising the need for quick action, the IMF has laid down guidelines for climbing in the Indian Himalayas. Last year, it decided to offer an extra amount to all expeditions sponsored by it as an incentive to clean up camps behind them. The army too has initiated some orientation programmes to inculcate a consciousness that the environment is more than the backdrop to a good shikar.

A Himalayan Adventure Trust was inaugurated last October with the avowed purpose of providing "a strict code of conduct" and to monitor trekkers and tour operators closely "to avoid malpractices by regulation". With Edmund Hillary as patron and Captain M.S. Kohli as chairman, the trustees include such renowned mountaineers as Chris Bonington and Junko Tabei.

Helicopters are now used to clean up the Alps, but the Himalayas are too extensive for that. Conscientiousness, then, is the priority. Saith adds that more ambitious climbers would take cleaning up more seriously if it came to be perceived as an added degree of difficulty. "Embarrassment is the key," he says. "Like oxygen. Now it's embarrassing to say I climbed it, but I used oxygen.'

Sudhir Sahi, secretary of the Himalayan Club, talks of a proposal for an ecological inner-line like the security inner-line, to cross which one needs a permit. Concerned mountaineers say that a key to their problem is porters. In peak season, it is difficult to hire enough of them. "Another problem is the shortage of ponies and mules," says Hukam Singh, DIG in the ITBP who led the cleanup expedition to Nun Kun last year. Most large expeditions release some of their porters at base camp, so they have fewer left to bring stuff back.

And what is buried is often not done with sufficient care. Colonel Kumar emphasises the need to burn cans before burying them, because animals dig them up if they can smell food. Too often, in any case, the snow is too deep or the rock too hard to dig. So waste is dumped behind a moraine, ready to spread across the field as the glacier advances. At the rate at which the garbage is spreading, the world's most glorious mountains might be known a few decades hence as the ugly Himalayas. —DAVID DEVADAS

ECOLOGICAL TASK FORCE

Growing Army

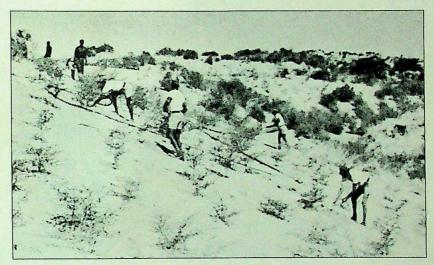
Greening operations a success

OR almost eight years now, an Indian Army task force has been combating not a marauding foreign army, but the vagaries of nature. The ecological battle is being fought on three fronts: the sprawling Rajasthan deserts, the mine-scarred Mussoorie hills, and the rolling Samba wastelands in Jammu and Kashmir.

"It is the first time in the world that an army has taken on greening

the temperatures fluctuate wildly between 2 degree and 52 degree Celsius. The men have been able to stick it out because they are local ex-servicemen familiar with the conditions. They've also involved other residents. "They've shown us there is hope in our land too," says Hawa Singh, a local farmer.

In contrast, the 127 Infantry Battalion has done yeoman work in the hills. Four years ago it set about regenerating 2,000 hectares of wasteland in Shahjahanpur block near Dehradun. Two years ago the 243-strong battalion landed at the Mussoorie hills. And with the help of scientists from the Dehradunbased Central Soil and Water Conservation Research Institute, it built 2,400



Planting saplings in Bikaner desert

operations," says Major-General Jasbir Singh, chief of the Territorial Army (TA). The first battalion of the Ecological Task Force (ETF) was set up in 1982 under the TA. Since then two more battalions have been added to the force—which is made of ex-servicemen-raising its strength to over 1,000. The idea of using the army to carry out afforestation work was mooted by Dr Norman Borlaug, director of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre in Mexico.

The first ETF project, undertaken by the 128 Infantry Battalion, began in 1983 in Rajasthan, 80 km off Bikaner. In seven years the 668-men battalion has created an oasis. Sixty-three lakh plants have been grown along a 50-km stretch. Eventually, the force aims at creating a greenbelt all along the bank of Indira Gandhi Canal, covering about 35,000 hectares. "Whenever you see green, think of us," quips Colonel P.S. Kochar, commanding officer of the battalion.

The task has proved arduous. Living conditions in the desert are harsh, and bunds to check soil erosion in the hills. Eleven of the 13 pockets badly scarred by limestone quarrying have been greened.

The 129 Infantry Battalion is also working in the Jammu and Kashmir hills—carrying on afforestation and soil conservation work. But the ETF may scale down its projects due to criticism from some officials of the Forest Department and Environment Ministry, who point to the high costs of deploying the army. What works out to Rs 24,000 per hectare in Bikaner and Rs 9,000 per hectare in Mussoorie could be achieved in half that cost by the Forest Department, they argue. However, ETF supporters point to the 95 per cent survival rate of trees planted by the task force.

With the Ministry of Environmentwhich has already spent Rs 8.5 crore on ETF-tightening its fist, the future of the ETF is not so rosy. "The term of these ETFs is being extended but the chances of additional ones is bleak," says DrB.S. Attri, scientist at the environment ministry. Perhaps, with Maneka Gandhi heading the ministry, the EFF could be in the green again. - SUDHIRENDAR SHARMA in Bikaner

The Unprintable Truth



"EXPLETIVES deleted" is an expression that became a household phrase to millions around the world in the wake of the Watergate drama, Richard Ni-

xon's fondness for the unprintable, diligently recorded on the White House tape machines, met with the almost universally observed American practice of the parenthesis "expletives deleted", or asteriks, leaving what the President had actually said to the readers' imagination.

So, when the Indian Express of March 29 used the four-letter word in a signed

front-page story with the perhaps intended objective of making readers sit up, it achieved its purpose. In newspaper offices, as elsewhere, it became an instant subject of discussion. and if a sampling of the capital's comments is representative of the country's opinion, the verdict

was generally unfavourable. Anyone who knows Arun Shourie's Indian Express knows that he is no

respector of precedents and has, over the years, developed his own style of news writing. It was, therefore, entirely in character that he should have chosen to show Devi Lal's warts largely in the form of telephone conversa-

tions. And to drive home his point, he seemed to revel in Devi Lal's use of the four-letter word to emphasise the deputy prime minister's earthiness.

In short, the Janata Dal leader was not reticent in pouring abuse on the writer of the story, on a fellow editor, on Commerce Minister Arun Nehru, and on a host of others, if the Express story is to be believed. Mercifully, Shourie did not offer a literal translation of the Indian four-letter word, in common use in the northern parts of the country, leaving non-Hindi-speaking readers somewhat mystified. But the point the story did not explain is why, after Devi Lal's resignation (subsequently taken back), Shourie in the company of Gurumurthy, a long-

term Express associate and an accountant by profession, went "to cajole" the deputy prime minister after the initial abusive telephone call.

Whatever the initial impact of the Shourie story (judging by the new letter Devi Lal despatched to the prime minister on the sins of the chairman of the Express group, Ram Nath Goenka, the deputy prime minister was suitably angry), the flaunting of the hitherto forbidden four-letter word in a signed frontpage story penned by the editor of a 'national" newspaper raises questions.

Morality is an incredibly difficult thing to define, linked as it is to the prevailing mores of a society. Besides, if everyone were to meekly follow

Shourie seemed to revel in Devi Lal's use of the four-letter word to emphasise the deputy prime minister's earthiness.

> convention, there would be little social progress in any society. The western world has sought to resolve this dilemma by grading films for projection in accordance with age, largely giving porn to the people who want it in a confined setting and making a distinction in practice between the so-called quality papers and tabloids while giving book publishers almost total freedom in the use of expletives of one kind or another.

> Thus, we find newspapers such as The New York Times recording the use of four-letter words by four asteriks or in the form of f*** while some of the mass circulated papers have few inhibitions in printing a dialogue in the raw.

In India, there are no mass circulated

tabloids, at least of the daily variety, and major newspapers calling themselves national must do duty for the so-called quality market as for more plebeian tastes. The major daily newspapers, at any rate, have progressed from genteel prose to more adventurous and investigative writing, but they had thus far turned their thumbs down on the unvarnished use of four-letter word. The Express has now chosen to break the convention.

The other question the Express story raises, confirmed by the deputy prime minister's public statements, is the unalloved attack on newspaper owners. Caught on the wrong foot by the Meham by-election, Devi Lal has been con-

stantly driving home his view that journalists are mere dumb driven cattle performing to the tunes of their masters.

It is not an uncommon obsession with Indian politicians, and one that has received some sustenance from the activist role proprietors have of late taken in the editorial content of newspapers. Devi Lal's attack, initially taking in all major newspaper owners, is now focused on the chairman of the Express group.

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Before the political establishment brings out its armour of "development journalism", the "third way" between a capitalist and socialist press (the socialist still

surviving in China, Cuba and Albania) and employees owning newspapers under government patronage, the journalistic community needs to make a few points to the Government.

A free press means that anyone, including the rich, can own newspapers. While reasonable restrictions to ensure plurality of views are in order, there cannot be a government fiat on how newspapers should be run. The complaint of the Indian press is that there are already too many indirect impediments to the growth of a healthy and free press. As for the use of four-letter words on the front pages of "national" newspapers, the reader will be the ultimate judge.



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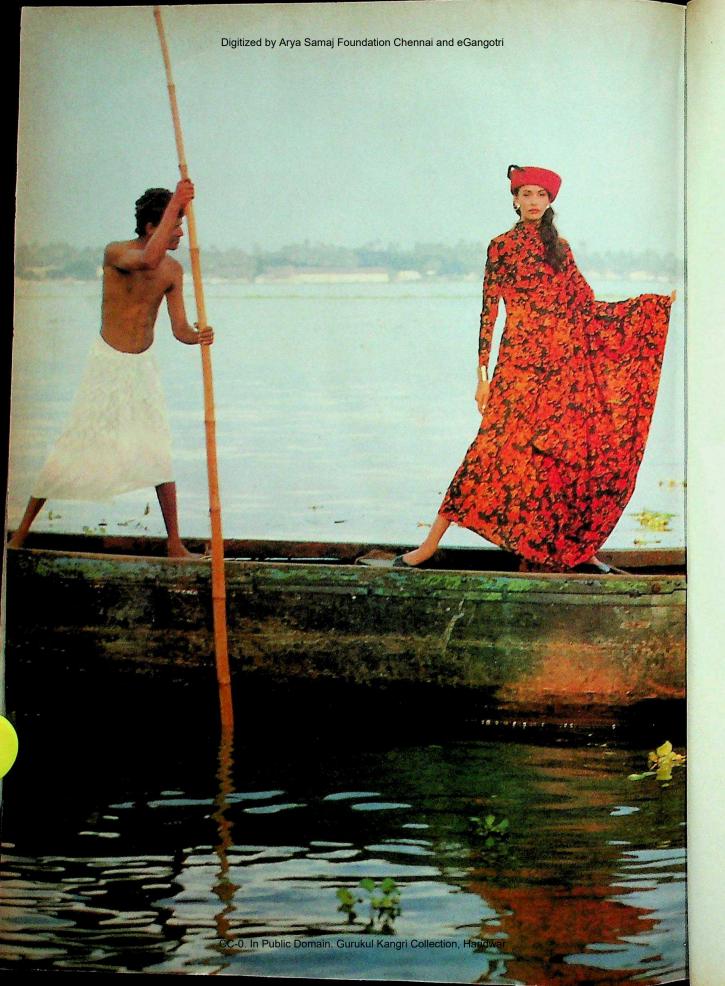
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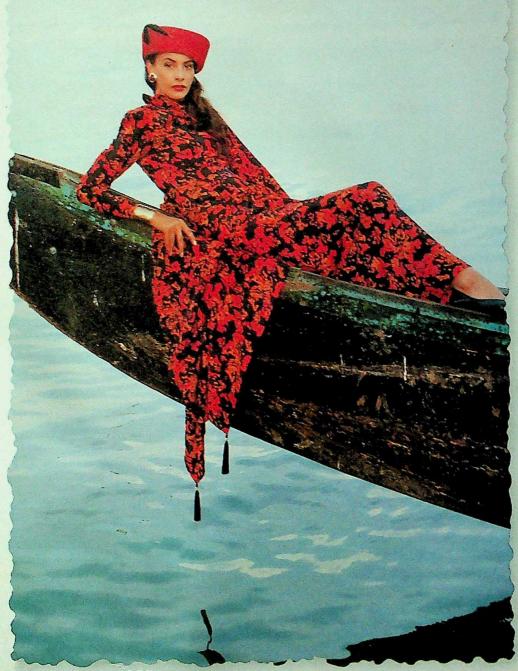
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A Well-known Indian



ON March 3, 1990, Nirad C. Chaudhuri became the fifth Indian to be presented the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters by the Oxford University. The others

are Rabindra Nath Tagore, S. Radhakrishnan, Indira Gandhi and Satyajit Ray. Three Bengalis out of five. Something to think about.

Niradbabu has been residing in Oxford since 1970. It was only after Thy Hand: Great Anarch appeared in 1987 that people in England woke up to the fact that Niradbabu was not only alive, but in full command of his richly endowed and powerful intellect. Thy Hand is nearly 1,000 pages long. When he sent the manuscript to Chatto and Windus they threw up their hands. Who would read a book that long. They asked Niradbabu to reduce the book to 350 pages. The answer from the author was characteristically unambiguous: not one page would be cut. That was that. The book was not to be published and he

would not go to another publisher. I got to know of this melancholy development and took up the matter with Graham Greene, a senior director of Chatto and nephew of the novelist. Greene had come to India with a delegation of British publishers. On his return, he reversed the earlier decision and the book was published without any cuts. It became a literary success without being a financial disaster. In fact, the first edition sold out in less than four months. Consequently he began to be lauded and discussed in the close-knit Oxford establishment. Chatto also brought out a paperback edition of his A Passage to England. All this led to the honorary degree, At 93, Niradbabu is perhaps the oldest recipient.

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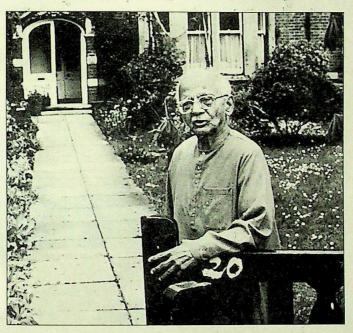
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wiftly,

Last month I spent two enthralling hours with Niradbabu and his wife at their Oxford home. He is in good health. She is not. Our conversation was in danger of becoming wide ranging. I

wanted him to talk about himself. For that he needed no great encouragement. He possesses considerable verbal ingenuity and is generally ahead of the likes of me. So one has to listen carefully and mostly in silence as Niradbabu's idea of a dialogue is that he speaks for both participants. Having known him for 36 years, I have after some effort got used to his ways.

He was delighted with the degree



Nirad outside his Oxford home: powerful intellect

and showed me colour photographs of the ceremony, taken by his talented son Dhruva. He gave me a copy of the speech delivered by, "The Public Orator in a Congregation held on 3 March, 1990, in presenting for the Honorary Degree of D. Litt". The language is archaic. The speech was actually delivered in Latin!

Let me quote from it. "The eminent Bengali whom I now present is throughly versed in both English and European poetry and has interpreted Indian society and customs to us with great intellectual ability, illuminating incidentally several aspects of our own society....Mr Chaudhuri expressed his view on contemporary events with a frankness which was too great to make him popular with his fellow Indians, praising certain aspects of the former Raj, and lacking in the requisite enthusiasm for the birth of New India. But with the passage of time his reputation at home is now restored. The 'Unknown Indian' of his book has deservedly won fame and recognition." Balanced and fair.

I asked Niradbabu what was he currently writing. "There will be no Vol. III of the autobiography in English." He spoke excitedly about his article in Bengali in Desh magazine of Calcutta. The

> writing project keeping him busy is his Bengali trilogy, Atmaghata Bengali. The book is being published by Mitra and Ghosh of Calcutta. Vol. I deals with Bengali mental life till 1900. Vol. II will tell us much about the decline of Bengali character, Vol. III will explain the process of that decline from 1920 to 1947. Somewhere in these volumes he will highlight the difference between the Bengali national movement and the national movement led by Gandhiji. Vol. III should be finished by the end of

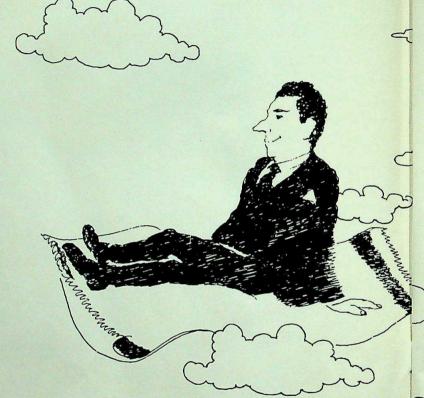
> In one of his books he says that his is a case of the survival of the unfittest. That is not so. He is fit as a

fiddle and there is no depletion of elan vital. Shaw and Russel at his age were showing distinct signs of senility.

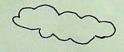
I asked him if he was now a determinist or still a free will wallah. "I have become a determinist." When I queried him on Tolstoy's theory of history, propounded in laborious prose at the end of War and Peace, he replied: "I do agree with Tolstoy, we are not free agents. Some unseen hand, some cosmic power is responsible for collective human behaviour." He paused. Then, "Take my case. I cannot explain my life on rational grounds. It is a combination of accidents and purposefulness".

It was getting dark and I had a train to catch to London. He asked me to wait. Slipped into another room, re-emerging with the handsome American editions of Thy Hand and The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian.

The unknown Indian had finally arrived.



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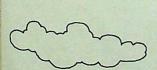
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Cuisine literature floods the market

ingly, is Tarla Dalal. With over half-a-million hardbacks sold, she outsells all the others put together. What's more, Dalal is just one of a series of authors

The answer, surpris-

churning out cookbooks that are outselling every other publication segment, barring religious books. Says a Bombay bookstore owner: "The number of people who buy these books is simply amazing." The prices vary: from Rs 75-90 for Dalal's books published in India to Rs 150-300 for those published abroad.

Some of the new cookbooks cater to specific cuisines (Hyderabadi, Saraswat, south Indian, Parsi), others to new methods (microwave cooking). Yet others are targeted at working women or the health-conscious (oil-less or lowcalorie cooking). Says Premila Lal, veteran cookbook writer and author of the Faber and Faber classic Indian Recipes: "There is far greater awareness about food than ever before. It is part of the ethnic revival across the country.'

While more and more people are becoming adventurous and have started eating out, the oil-soaked food at some restaurants and expensive prices at others often act as deterrents. Enter the cookbook, the ideal resource for the harried housewife hassled by a demanding family to produce something which looks good and tastes like the biryani at the restaurant downtown. Says Dalal: "Mummy was forced to deliver, the husbands were getting bored of dalbhat." Besides, joint families were slowly disintegrating, requiring a book to substitute for grandmother's encyclopaedic knowledge of spices and condiments.

As people have become more willing to try out new dishes, writers have begun offering books catering to those Indian cuisines under-represented so far: Rajasthani, Goan, Bengali, Parsi. Lazzat-e-Khas, published by Ismailia Society, has recipes for Hyderabadi dishes. Jaya Shenoy has written Dakshin Bharat Dishes, including recipes for rasams. kosumbari, sanna, appams and avial. The Saraswat Mahila Samaj has put out Rasachandrika, offering Saraswat delicacies like murku, tendodle and kokumkadhi. And Jeroo Mehta's 101 Parsi Recipes is a rage among those who love dhansak and patra-ni-machchhi. Of a different genre is Jyoti Parekh's scholarly The Wonderworld of Vegetarian Cooking. Lavishly produced, it includes tips on vegetable and fruit carving. Says Parekh: "There are many cookbooks in the market but I feel the presentation of food is equally important." One book is devoted exclusively to naans and rotis.

Others too are in tune with the times. Even before microwave ovens make their mark at Indian shopping arcades. books are being written. Microtonic India has commissioned Premila Lal to do a book on meat dishes, Tarla Dalal to do one on vegetarian dishes, and journalist Rahul Singh one for bachelors. In fact, many authors are writing books which are given out with cooking equipment:

Lal has written books distributed with Godrej pressure cookers, Sweetex saccharine, Magnachef stoves. Rallis mixers, Rex corn. and baking and custard powders.

cookbooks: recipe for success

Array of

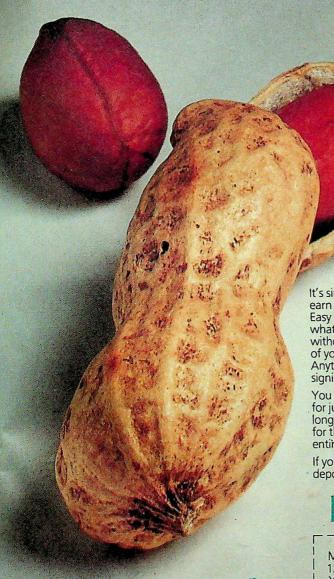
Internationally, too. there is a boom in Indian cookbooks. Madhur Jaffrey's two books are runaway successes. Film producer Ismail Mer-

chant has chipped in with one. The popular New York restaurant, Bombay Palace, published a cookbook last year. Digvijay Singh of Saliana has published Cooking Delights of Maharajahs. Shalini Holkar's book on royal cuisine, though nearly a decade old, continues to attract discerning buyers. Manju Shivraj Singh has written a semi-autobiographical Royal Indian Cookery. Piper Books has brought out the Raj Cook Book.

Yet, the mantle of India's Julia Child, the popular, motherly American TV hostess, falls on Tarla Dalal. Says her son Sanjay Dalal, who publishes her books: "Our key to success is easy-to-use recipes. You always get it right." In the last 10 years she has published seven books. all on vegetarian cuisines, and she is now aiming at specific markets-her next book will be for sportsmen, cowritten with Dr Swati Piramal of the Gopikrishna Piramal Memorial Hospital. Says she: "Indian sportsmen still do not know what kind of diet to follow. Another book will be on party cooking. There will also be books for teenagers and for those over 50. Other plans include language editions, instant powder mixes, outdoor catering, video cassettes. Says Sanjay Dalal: "My aim is to exploit the commercial possibilities of my mother's name." And there'll always be palates willing to pay for it.

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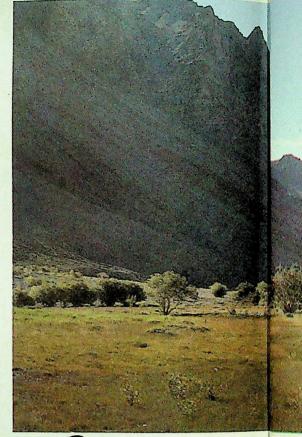
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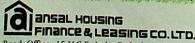
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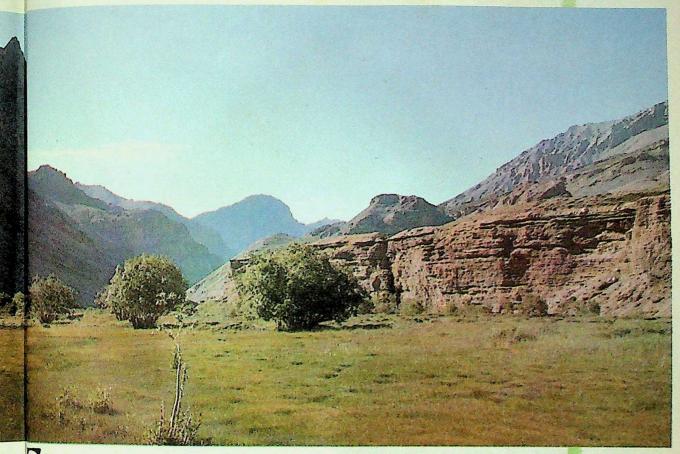
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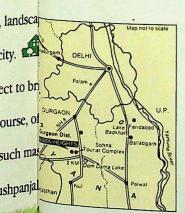
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Walking Tall

Impressive fiction debut

TRYING TO GROW by FIRDAUS KANGA Bloomsbury Price: Rs 392, Pages: 242

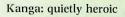


AREailments amusing? Do people with cancer laugh? When terminally ill himself, J.B.S. Haldane thought they should and wrote a poem called 'Cancer's Funny Thing'. E.M. For-

ster pondered over the problem too and said, with customary sanity, that in a world of gigantic horror nothing makes sense except human gestures of dissent.

Firdaus Kanga's novel, Trying to

Grow, dissents. Its first-person protagonist is born with Osteogenesis imperfecta, a Latin euphemism for brittle bones. Before he has turned five, Brit (short for 'brittle' and 'British') has cracked his legs as many as eleven times. His teeth have to wage war against bars of chocolate. Until he learns to bite as much as he can chew, the teeth come spitting out with the food.





man as an artist.

The cast of the novel is understandably small, consisting mostly of plaster and Anglicized Bombay Parsees. Brit is the younger of two children in a musical family that goes to the market with a long Chopin Liszt and comes Bach after buying all the available Mozart. The banter, the informality and the cheerful bonhomie of Brit's friends are highly

cosmopolitan. More important, they are

necessary to his struggle for emotional

world is not-caring, sensitive, imagi-

native and quietly heroic. *Trying to Grow* effectively dramatises this process of an unusually painful self-develop-

ment. It is a portrait of the handicapped

Brit's parents give up taking him to fraudulent fakirs in the hope of a cure. When a doctor says Brit won't grow beyond four feet, his mother retorts: "It's the height you reach that count, not the height you are." Brit's sister and parents sensibly leave his physicality alone and

concentrate on his inner life. By the end of the novel, during which Brit's wheelchair has traversed diverse sexual directions, we know his environment and his handicap have given him a shape we might all be better human beings with.

This debut work of fiction could so easily have been merely a good sob story: its ingredients automatically suggest an aesthetic weepy. In the

Nature Romp

Khushwant's other passion

NATURE WATCH by KHUSHWANT SINGH Lustre Press Price: not stated; Pages: 96

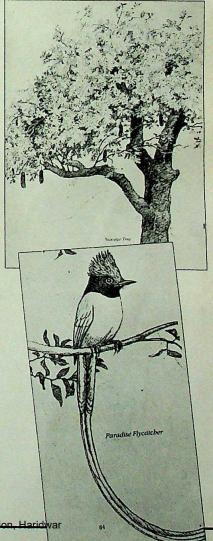


IT'S the birds and the bees that Khushwant Singh is writing about again, but not of his usual kind. He has been ensnared by a more beguiling seductress: mother nature.

Summer, then for

Singh, is not just a time to watch women's midriffs. But a period to observe the gulmohar trees ablaze in their fierce scarlets. And to record the spec-

Sausage tree and Paradise Flycatcher



EXCERPT

'Wow!' I'd say, shooting my eyebrows into my hair, smoothing my palm against her leg from below her hot-pants to her knee. 'You have got such silky skin; bet you could be a model for Afghan Snow.'

Ruby would gasp and breathe, 'Don't do that! You're arousing me, you devil.' And we'd laugh our mouths off with excitement.

When she came in through the door, I'd drop the book I was reading and say, 'Could you pick that up for me?'

'Sure!' She'd get on her knees and bend over... while I stared down her blouse at the succulent strawberries and cream of her breasts. We both knew I could reach for that book from my wheelchair as easily as I could scratch my head.

But Brit's spine compensates for his breakable bones—it neither bends nor cracks. Slowly, through his fractured years, Brit grows into what only a callous world can see as deformed; his more sensitive friends and family, instead, help him flower into what the

event it is very considerably more. If Firdaus Kanga himself is Brit and lives atop a wheelchair, he seems to be doing no bad job rolling himself up towards the marvellous Malabar Hill of modern Indian fiction.

-RUKUN ADVANI

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tacular entrance of the laburnums whose blossoms. Singh writes, "appear in clusters like bunches of golden grapes". Sex scenes in this book are restricted to things like the frenzied mating of koels or the emancipated courtship of baya birds.

Singh's love affair with nature began when as a young man he spent some years at Oxford soaking in the enchanting English countryside. When he returned to Delhi he found he knew very little about the city's flora and fauna. Thus began his voyage of discovery.

Most of his observations about nature in the book are restricted to what he recorded in his own garden and the clubs where he played tennis or lolled around in a pool. Despite the limited canvas, Singh's keen sense of perception is able to capture the small but beautiful things of life that most of us seem oblivious too.

His book is specially relevant because in the mindless rush of modern day living the months have begun taking on different connotations. January.

EXC ERP

Bird song can be heard round the clock; pheasants' deep-throated hook, hook, hook, tree pies' grating overture followed by a tinkling of bells, and golden orioles' fruity mellifluous calls can be heard every morning. On warm afternoons the kooh, kooh of coppersmiths' (basanta or the crimson throated babbler) sounds very much like short blasts made by diesel-operated flour mills in villages.

for instance, means time to beware of car batteries running down. March is examination time for children. May, the marriage season. For Singh, however, each month brings its own share of little surprises in the form of trees in bloom, delicious fruit to eat and butterflies and birds to look out for.

Singh's style is chatty, but he shows up his intellectual laziness by relying too often on poems by bards like Kalidas to describe the seasons. It would have been better to have had more of his perceptions. What breathes life into the book, however, are the inspiring illustrations by Suddhasattwa Basu. Through his paintings and sketches, Basu brings out the resplendence of nature where Singh's words fail to do so.

The only time Singh betrays his other passions is while explaining why the bottoms of some female rhesus monkeys are redder than others. According to him: "A bright red behind in a Lady Rhesus is in fact a green signal for a randy Sir Rhesus." That ejaculation apart, his diary of nature around him is a revealing experience. -RAJ CHENGAPPA

Gripping Tale

Tejaswi's novella is masterly

CARVALHO by purnachandra tejaswi Garutman Pvt Ltd Price: Rs 45; Pages: 98



THIS is a remarkable novel, actually novella, and one measure of its excellence is that neither the tardy punctuation nor the inconsistent translation-from Kannada-distract. Tejaswi paints in his characters and the

countryside with the aplomb of the superior craftsman, and tells a story fascinating in both-concept and setting.

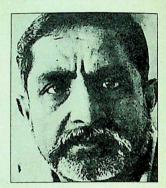
The eponymous hero of the book is "a great botanist, an entomologist of genius", stationed in rural Chikmagalur, and lately engrossed in the pursuit of a life-time: the quest for a reptile from pre-history, the flying lizard. Carvalho has international backing; "the Smithsonian Institute, the Geological Society, and the British Geological unit have come forward with monetary help to the tune of 7,000 pounds sterling".

But making this book wonderful is the fact that Carvalho has neither been put on the trail of the reptile by highfalutin' scientists, nor are his fellow journeymen in pursuit of the grail heavy-duty scholars. The source of his inspiration is a rural truant, Mandanna, who claims to have seen the flying wonder; and the motley group that form the adventure squad which penetrates into the thick forests around Norvey consists of a cook-cum-expert-treeclimber, bow-legged Biryani Kariappa, Prabhakara, who handles the movie camera, Mandanna, who's the guide. Yenkta the snake-catcher, Kiwi the dog. Carvalho himself, and the shadowy narrator, whose only raison d'etre seems to be the telling of the story.

Welding the group together are the feelings of excitement and wonderment The author is telling us that awe of the unknown remains an emotion that can ignite and seize the imagination of the most unlikely of people, and set them hurtling down strange paths.

However, Tejaswi's real triumph is his ability to render real and threedimensional all the minor and major

Tejaswi: skilled construction



R

Kariappa was in a fix; with one arm he held on to the tree and with the other the tail. We felt he couldn't stay on in that position for long.

Yenkta shouted from below: "Wait, wait, I am coming up." The flying lizard tugged fiercely at Kariappa's hand. Once, when he tried to pull it nearer his palm, it hissed like a snake and from near its hood, close to the ear, its skin got extended like an umbrella.

characters-Mandanna and Biryani Kariappa are unforgettable-who people this slim book, and to tell with wry humour the smaller stories even as the larger enterprise unfolds.

There is the high farce of the bees laying waste the minister's public meeting-incidentally, bee-keeping as a vocation is majorly dwelt upon in the book, perhaps an indication of the author's predilections. Then there is Mandanna's marriage to a mammoth-breasted cretin, and his subsequent arraignment in an illicit distillation case. Tejaswi impresses to the very last word. The end sees a breathless chase being given to the flying lizard; and a climax both poignant and cosmic in its reverberations.

—TARUN J. TEJPAL

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PAL



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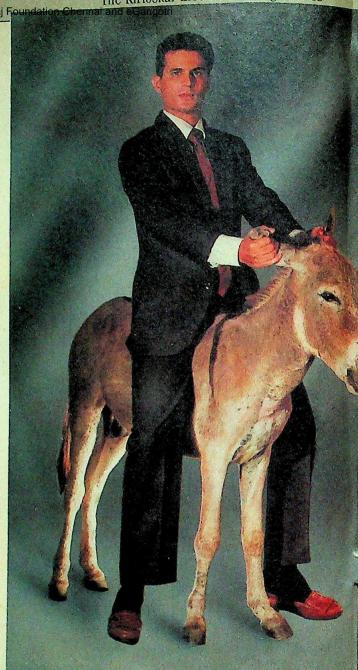


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THE YEY **ESSENCE OF** LEADERSHIP IS OFTEN **NOTHING** BUT SHEER CUSSEDNESS.



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Tell Kirloskar Electric a job can't be done and it's like showing a red rag to a bull. We can't resist it. But all the engineering genius in the world can come to nought without sheer staying power. Once we take on a job, we never give up.

Take just one instance. The 125 KW DC roller table motors for the blooming and slabbing mill at the Bokaro Steel Plant. The original motors, imported from Russia over twenty years ago needed to be replaced. What made the job really difficult was the fact that the new replacements had to be interchangeable, both mechanically and electrically, with the originals. And yet perform better.

As they say in electrical circles, when everybody else shies away, get Kirloskar Electric. The Bokaro people called us. Picture the scene. 35 tonnes of red hot iron billets, each following on the heels of the previous one, at a temperature of 1000°C, crashing on rollers and then travelling at murderous speeds to be sprayed by jets of water

We watched and studied the drives for weeks, then got back

and made a detailed proposal with designs. Go back, they said. They had raised the ante. The motors had now to work for at least 8 hours at a time even if the supply of cooling air was stopped. We had to raise the output without changing the physical dimensions an iota. We re-designed the whole motor with a far superior insulation scheme and excellent heat transfer capability.

End of story? Hardly. Our prototype failed. One of the windings overheated by 30° Kelvin and the commutation ability of the machine was poor.

Throw in the towel, everyone told us. No way, we said. We went back to work with a vengeance. Now listen to this. In 10 days, yes 10 days flat, we re-designed the windings. We have, after all, perhaps the finest electrical design engineers in the country.

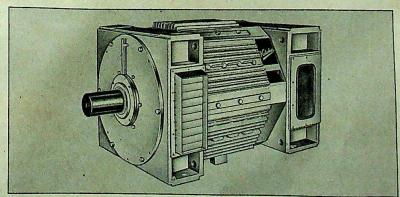
Those motors are working just fine. And they saved a substantial amount of foreign exchange.

But Kirloskar Electric is more than the sum of all the firsts it has earned over the years. We are India's leading industrial electrics and electronics company in the private sector. We make some of the finest standard AC and DC drives, transformers, welding equipment and systems, motorised gear units, equipment for defence, electronic control equipment, CNCs, etc. But the one single reason why we are the prime movers in our field is because the centre of gravity at Kirloskar Electric is the customer. Our hi-tech, engineering expertise, superior quality and reliability are all geared to anticipate and respond to his needs.



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When nobody else can do the job, Kirloskar Electric will.



Kato: oriental glamour

• There's a nip in Bengal's air. courtesy cinematic Hisako Kato, a Japanese film actress, and Mithun Chakraborty, the flamboyant 'Bengali babu' of the Indian silver screen. The unlikely partnership has blossomed under producer Bishwanath Ghosh who has lured Kato from Tokyo to star opposite Mithun in Bengali production. his Swarna-Trishna (Thirst for Gold). Though Mithun's presence in Calcutta has caused a flutter among the city's bhadralok, it is Kato, 30, who is attracting all the curiosity. Having acted in several Japanese films and TV serials, she is well-known in Japan. But on her Indian odyssey, she prefers to wear a mask of Oriental inscrutability, rarely appearing in public. That may be understandable. Kato speaks little English, let alone Bengali, and is having considerable problems with her dialogues and diction. But she has picked up a few obvious Bengali phrases like "ami tomake bhalobashi." (I love you.) And what does she think about Mithun? "A very

♦ With the Congress(I) out of power, doe-eved Vyjanthimala Bali has decided to spend more time pursuing her original voca-

tion-classical Indian dance. The Lok Sabha MP, who is on the flip side of 50, has pranced back onto the dance circuit with an ambitious solo ballet, in aid of the Dr Bali Pharma Foundation (which dispenses life-saving drugs). that is sponsored by cigarette giant ITC.

True to form, Bali has decided to stick to a contemporary theme-the dancedrama presents the many stages of man's progress: his evolution, near-destruction and finally emancipation through self-realisation. Says

Bali: dancing days again

AVINASH PASRICHA





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Bali: "This is a long-cherished

venture choreographed by me. Through the medium of dance, I want to spread the message of universal relevance. It is modern and incorporates different styles of dance necessary." where Bali is obviously happiest when dancing to her own tune.

Diamonds are forever. At least this one is, considering it has been around since the 16th century. Known as the Agra diamond, the fabulous light pink gem was acquired by the founder of the Mughal dynasty, Emperor Babar, along with the better-known Kohinoor diamond. But now, it is slated to find a new owner when it is auctioned soon in London. Ex-

pected minimum bid? £1 million (Rs 2.75 crore). The Agra diamond is almost one inch in diameter and is the largest pink diamond ever to be auctioned. What adds to the value is its history. It originally belonged to the raja of Gwalior who gifted it to Babar in exchange for their lives after their defeat in a battle in 1526. Now, it will be the focus of a different battle-in Christie's.

Agra diamond: new battle



GOPAL SUNGER

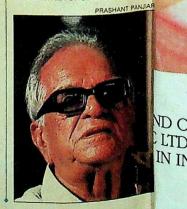
Lata: song of praise

 The nightingale is back. After a year of ill-health, Lata Mangeshkar re-emerged in public to receive the Dadasahib Phalke Award for a lifetime's contribution to Indian cinema. For four decades she's represented the best in popular culture. Those who thought she's fading out have been silenced by her hits for Maine Pyar Kiya. Says she: "Now they all want me to sing for them." Who doesn't, Lata?

SIGN POST

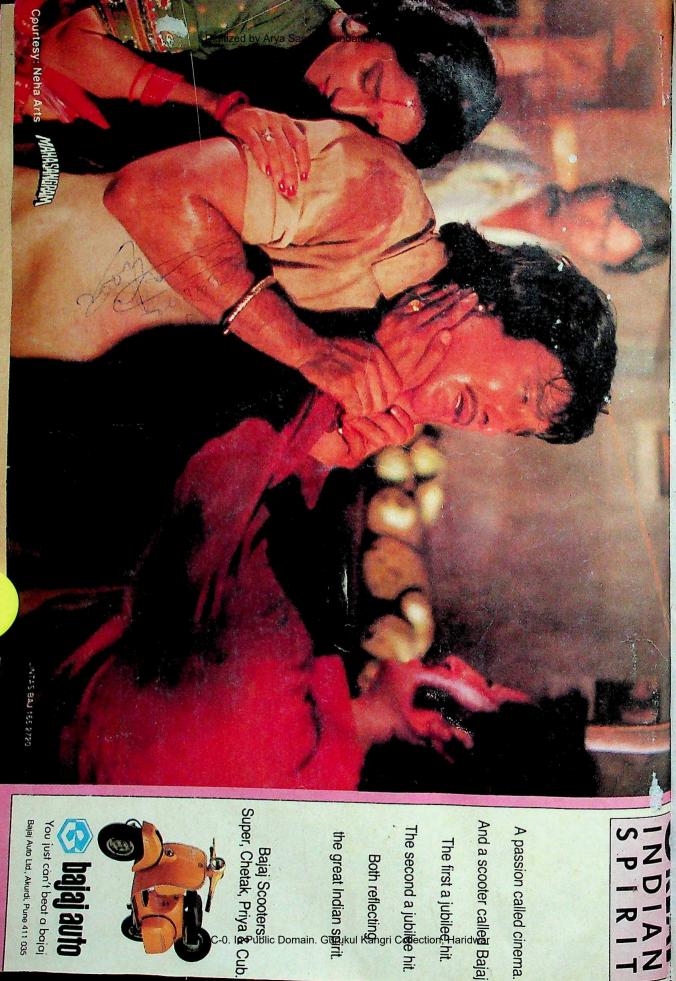
■ DIED: B.T.Ranadive. 86, Marxist leader. He was the president of CITU, the powerful trade union body, for many years. His greatest contribution to the left movement was as a member of the politburo of the undivided Communist Party of India and the CPI(M) for almost half a century.

Ranadive: end of an era



good man." Kato.





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